Report:

1986 STUDY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE-UNEMPLOYABLE RECIPIENTS: LENGTH OF ASSISTANCE USE

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and Professional Development

1986 STUDY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE-UNEMPLOYABLE RECIPIENTS: LENGTH OF ASSISTANCE USE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report uses payment history data to measure the length of time that recipients use the General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) program. The GA-U program provides financial assistance and medical treatment to people with medically verifiable incapacities lasting at least 60 days which prevent employment.

Length of GA-U use was measured from two perspectives. Length of use between January 1980 and September 1986 was examined for a sample of GA-U recipients on the July 1986 Warrant Roll. Length of use was also examined for cases on the January 1984 Warrant Roll which had opened within the previous six weeks. This provides both retrospective and prospective looks at length of assistance use.

The look at past use by GA-U users in July 1986 produced the following findings:

- Those on the July 1986 Warrant Roll used GA-U for an average of 15.8 months during an average of 2.1 separate episodes. Breaks between episodes were usually short. Only 24 percent lasted as long as six months, and over half lasted less than one month.

- Recipients with above average GA-U use included the mentally ill (19.9 months), those aged 50 to 59 years (19.9 months) and 40 to 49 years (17.5 months), women (16.8 months) and the mentally retarded (16.2 months).

- Recipients with below average GA-U use included those aged 20 to 29 years (13.6 months) and over 59 years of age (13.7 months), those with substance abuse incapacities (15.1 months), those with physical incapacities (15.2 months), and men (15.3 months).

- Seventeen percent of the women using GA-U had used Aid to Families with Dependent Children previously, as opposed to only three percent of the men.

Comparisons between GA-U users in July 1986 and June 1982 showed that:

- Length of GA-U use has dropped slightly since 1982 -- from 16.5 months to 15.8 months. This resulted from an increase in the number of cases with substance abuse incapacities, which have below average lengths of use.

- Length of GA-U use by recipients with substance abuse incapacities increased by 29 percent between 1982 and 1986 but remained essentially unchanged for recipients with other incapacities.

GA-U recipients from the January 1984 Warrant Roll whose cases opened in late 1983 show the length of GA-U use by recipients with 34 to 35 months of potential follow-up. Findings on subsequent GA-U use by this group can be used to simulate the impact of placing time limits on GA-U use. Findings include:

- Recipients who entered the GA-U program in late 1983 used the program for an average of 12.4 months. Almost 40 percent would be affected by a 12 month limit on participation.

- The mentally ill and mentally retarded used GA-U the longest. Fifty-eight percent of the mentally retarded and 51 percent of the mentally ill would be affected by a 12 month duration limit, as opposed to 36 percent of those with physical or substance abuse incapacities.

- Eighteen percent of the cases opened in late 1983 entered the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for aged or disabled adults in the 32 months following January 1984. However, almost 55 percent of these recipients also used GA-U for more than 12 months and would be affected by a 12 month duration limit.

Comparisons of cases opened at six-month intervals revealed the following changes in the characteristics of GA-U case openings:

- The percent of new GA-U cases involving substance abuse as the primary incapacity has increased -- from one-third at the end of 1983 to close to 40 percent in mid-1986.

- Persons with substance abuse as a primary incapacity made up less than 26 percent of the July 1986 GA-U caseload because of their shorter than average length of assistance use.

- The percent of GA-U openings involving recent inmigrants to Washington State has increased since 1983. Six percent of the cases opened during the last six weeks of 1983 involved recipients who had been in Washington for three months or less. By mid-1986 this figure had increased to 13 percent.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

General Assistance programs were established by state and local governments more than 50 years ago to provide temporary cash assistance for low-income people.

Washington has two General Assistance programs, the General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) program and General Assistance to Pregnant Women. The GA-U program provides financial assistance and medical treatment to people with medically verifiable incapacities lasting at least 60 days which prevent gainful employment.

The caseload of the GA-U program has almost doubled since 1981, increasing by 18.6 percent between July 1985 and June 1986 alone.

This report is the second of three produced by the General Assistance Characteristics Study to describe the characteristics of GA-U recipients and the dynamics of program participation.

The first report: 1986 Study of Characteristics of General Assistance-Unemployable Recipients described demographic characteristics of GA-U recipients, treatment referrals, referrals to other support programs, and trends in GA-U caseload growth. It will be referred to as the "Characteristics Report".

The present report, the "Longitudinal Report", uses payment history data to provide information on the length of assistance use by GA-U recipients and movement from the state-funded GA-U program to the federally funded Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

The third report compares Washington's GA-U program to programs for incapacitated indigents in other states.

Objectives of the Longitudinal Report

The objectives of this report are:

1) To describe the length of GA-U use between January 1980 and September 1986 by a sample of recent GA-U recipients. Descriptions include counts of the number of GA-U episodes and the overall duration of GA-U use by incapacity, age, and sex.

2) To describe the length of GA-U use and movement to SSI through September 1986 for GA-U recipients who entered the program in November and December 1983. Descriptions by incapacity show who would be most affected by placing duration limits on GA-U use.

3) To compare incapacities, length of residence, and patterns of prior assistance use for GA-U recipients whose cases opened in 1983, 1984, 1985, and 1986. Descriptions document changes in the characteristics of GA-U users.

Key Features of the GA-U Program

The GA-U program provides cash grants and medical services to adults age 18 to 65 who are unemployable due to a mental, emotional, or physical incapacity. To become a GA-U recipient, incapacitated people must qualify both financially and medically. Figure 1.1 shows the steps in the approval process. Financial eligibility is based on income and resource tests. Medical eligibility is determined using the Progressive Evaluation Process (PEP).

The PEP process is a tool for determining if an incapacity makes an applicant eligible for GA-U. Current physician evaluations are obtained and used in a seven step process to determine the existence, severity, functional limitations, and duration of an incapacity. Eligibility depends on whether an incapacity will prevent gainful employment for at least two months.

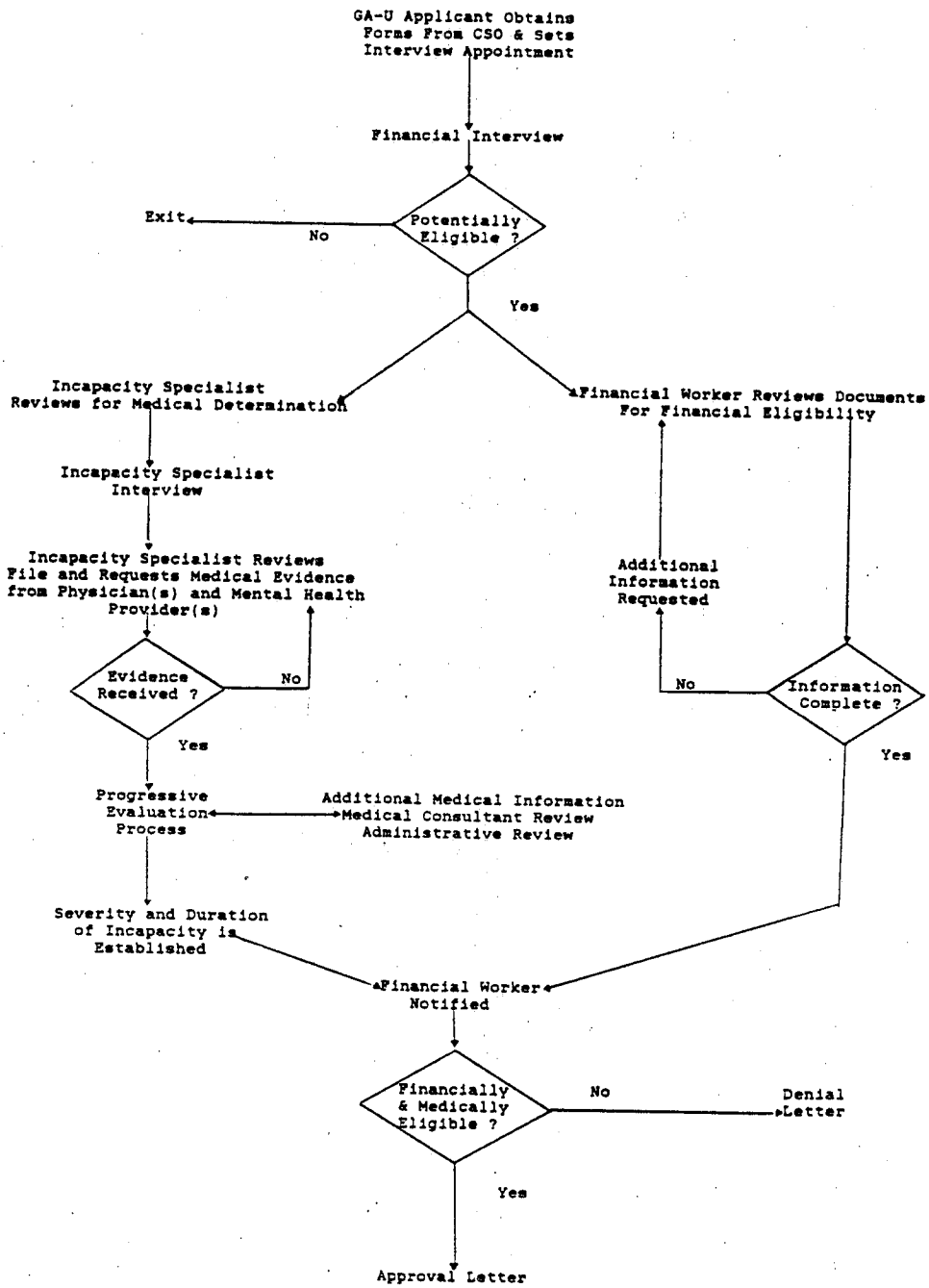
Medical eligibility is approved for periods ranging from two months to one year, depending on the expected length of the incapacity. Financial eligibility is reviewed every six months or when a change is reported in the client's financial status.

Once approved, recipients are referred for treatment and to other programs. Treatment may include medical services, mental health services through community mental health centers, participation in alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, and physical therapy.

Recipients may be referred to income assistance programs administered by the federal Social Security Administration (including SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance), and to the support and treatment programs of the Veterans Administration, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

FIGURE 1.1

GA-U ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS



Recipients can be required to participate in treatment and to apply for entry into other programs as a condition of receiving their GA-U grant. Participation is monitored by Community Services Office (CSO) staff. Those who do not cooperate with a required treatment or program without good cause may be sanctioned. The sanction for the first refusal is loss of one week's grant; second refusal: one month's grant; third and subsequent refusals: two month's grants.

When the first period of medical eligibility ends, clients may have their grants continued through a redetermination process. The redetermination process is similar to the initial application process, with one exception.

For redeterminations, a rule known as the "termination proviso" requires that a "clear showing of material improvement in medical or mental condition" must be made before termination can take place. This proviso is added as the first step of the PEP process.

If no improvement is apparent from physician statements, the GA-U grant is reauthorized without application of any other PEP criteria. If there is significant improvement, the PEP process continues through the seven steps used in initial determinations until a decision is made. Improvement must be sufficient to make the recipient capable of gainful employment.

Data Sources

It is common for GA-U recipients to have more than one episode of GA-U use. However, most automated data systems within DSHS only measure the length of individual GA-U episodes. Existing reporting systems do not track the number of assistance episodes or the total length of assistance for individual clients.

This report uses Records of Assistance Paid (RAPs) data from the department's Client History System to provide longitudinal payment histories on all episodes of assistance.

Computer programs were written to construct episodes out of payment data. Episodes were defined using opening and closing records contained in RAPs files. The resulting history files were merged with data on client characteristics contained in Warrant Roll files. Data on incapacities were obtained from Social Service Payment System (SSPS) files and merged with the Warrant Roll and history

data when available. 1/

This study also gathered data from GA-U financial and social service case records in nine selected CSOs. 2/ While case record data are not presented in this report, they have been used to verify computerized records data and gather explanations for patterns of assistance observed in computerized files.

Analysis Samples

Chapter 2 is based on a random sample of 4,052 cases drawn from the July 1986 Warrant Roll. The July 1986 Warrant Roll identifies GA-U recipients who were mailed a regular monthly GA-U warrant at the end of June 1986.

Payment records for this sample were requested for the period between January 1980 and September 1986. Payment episode histories could be constructed for 3,780 (93 percent) of the 4,052 cases. The remaining 272 cases were dropped because of errors in opening and closing dates.

Chapters 3 and 4 are based on groups of new GA-U cases opened at six-month intervals from the end of 1983 through mid-1986. All Warrant Roll cases opened between November 15 and December 31 of 1983, 1984 and 1985 were selected, as were all Warrant Roll cases opened between May 15 and June 30 of 1984, 1985, and 1986.

Cases were identified on Warrant Roll files for January and July 1984, 1985, and 1986. The size of each group of newly-opened GA-U cases is shown on Table 1.1 along with the number of cases for which episode histories could be constructed.

1/ Further information on the construction of analysis files is provided in Appendix A of this report. The characteristics and merging of Warrant Roll and SSPS files are described in greater detail in Chapter 1 of the Characteristics Report.

The Characteristics Report described only those cases with both Warrant Roll and SSPS data. Files used in this report contain all Warrant Roll cases, regardless of whether SSPS data could be found for them.

2/ The CSOs are Spokane North and Spokane Southwest (DSHS Region 1), Yakima (Region 2), Everett (Region 3), Belltown and Rainier (Region 4), Pierce North (Region 5), Aberdeen and Vancouver (Region 6).

TABLE 1.1

SAMPLE SIZES FOR ANALYSES OF NEW OPENINGS

WARRANT ROLL/OPENING DATES	Warrant Roll Cases	Number With Episode Data
January 1984 / Openings between November 15 and December 31, 1983	1,482	1,430
July 1984 / Openings between May 15 and June 30, 1984	1,372	1,325
January 1985 / Openings between November 15 and December 31, 1984	1,627	1,578
July 1985 / Openings between May 15 and June 30, 1985	1,876	1,836
January 1986 / Openings between November 15 and December 31, 1985	1,693	1,671
July 1986 / Openings between May 15 and June 30, 1986	2,149	551 a/

NOTES: This table shows the number of cases for which valid payment histories could be constructed.

a/ History data for the May 15 to July 30, 1986 group was taken from the subset of the 4,052 cases selected for Chapter 2's analysis whose cases were opened (or reopened) during that period.

CHAPTER 2: LENGTH OF USE BY CURRENT RECIPIENTS

This chapter describes the GA-U use of a recent sample of recipients and their participation in other assistance programs. Sample members were drawn from the July 1986 Warrant Roll.

Findings on GA-U use include:

- The average length of GA-U use between January 1980 and September 1986, across all episodes of GA-U use, was 15.8 months. Forty-six percent had used GA-U for 12 months or more.

- Almost half of all GA-U recipients (46 percent) had more than one episode of GA-U use between January 1980 and September 1986. Nine percent had more than five episodes. The average number of episodes per recipient was 2.1.

- Most recipients with more than one episode of GA-U use were off assistance for only short periods of time. Fifty-five percent of all gaps between episodes lasted less than one month. Only 24 percent of the gaps lasted six months or more.

- Recipients with mental health incapacities used GA-U the longest: 19.9 months in an average of 2.2 episodes.

- Recipients with mental retardation incapacities used GA-U for 16.6 months in an average of 1.8 episodes.

- Recipients with substance abuse incapacities and physical incapacities had the shortest total use: 15.1 months and 15.2 months respectively.

- Recipients with substance abuse incapacities used GA-U in an average of 2.5 episodes, while those with physical incapacities had 1.8 episodes.

Findings on changes in length of GA-U use included:

- The average length of GA-U use dropped slightly from June 1982 to July 1986 -- from 16.5 months to 15.8 months.

- Length of GA-U use by recipients with physical incapacities, mental health incapacities, and mental retardation incapacities has not changed since July 1982.

- Length of use for recipients with substance abuse incapacities increased by 29 percent between 1982 and 1986. This did not increase the average length of assistance use by all recipients because substance abuse clients had a shorter than average length of use compared to other clients.

Findings on participation in other programs include:

- Seventeen percent of the women and three percent of the men who received GA-U in July 1986 had received AFDC payments at some time between January 1980 and September 1986.

- Fifty-four percent of those who had used AFDC were 40 years of age or older in July 1986.

Length of GA-U Use

Because of multiple GA-U episodes, traditional length of use statistics based on only one episode substantially understate duration on assistance. 1/ As one might expect,

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1/ The average length of the most recent episode for the July 1986 sample was 9.1 months according to client history files as opposed to 8.3 months measured from Warrant Roll data in the Characteristics Report. Appendix Table A2.1 compares distributions of length of use produced using these two data sources.

Statistics on length of current episode shown here differ slightly from those shown in the Characteristics Report, but the overall picture is similar. The Characteristics Report measured length of GA-U use for cases on the July 1986 Warrant Roll through July 1, 1986. This report measures GA-U use for a sample of July 1986 Warrant Roll recipients through September 30, 1986.

One other difference is important. The Characteristics Report described GA-U use for recipients with both Warrant Roll and SSPS data. The Longitudinal Report provides length of use figures for Warrant Roll cases regardless of whether SSPS data are available. This eliminates biases caused by missing SSPS records.

TABLE 2.1

NUMBER OF GA-U EPISODES
BETWEEN JANUARY 1980 AND SEPTEMBER 1986
AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF USE BY NUMBER OF EPISODES,
FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 WARRANT ROLL

NUMBER OF EPISODES	Percent of Cases	Average Total Length of Use
One	54.3%	8.6 months
Two	20.3%	17.2 months
Three	10.6%	25.3 months
Four	5.9%	28.6 months
Five or more	8.9%	37.4 months
Average	2.1 episodes	15.8 months
Number of Cases	3,780	

SOURCE: Records of Assistance Paid between January 1980 and September 1986 for a random sample of 4,051 GA-U cases on the July 1986 Warrant Roll. Records of Assistance Paid data could not be analyzed for 271 cases, which are not included in this table.

NOTE: Episodes are defined by opening and closing dates in Records of Assistance Paid data.

TABLE 2.2

LENGTH OF GA-U USE IN ALL EPISODES
BETWEEN JANUARY 1980 AND SEPTEMBER 1986,
FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 WARRANT ROLL

LENGTH OF SERVICE	Percent	Cumulative Percent
One month or less	3.8%	3.8%
Two to five months	27.7%	31.5%
Six to eleven months	22.1%	53.6%
12 to 23 months	23.4%	77.0%
24 to 35 months	11.6%	88.6%
36 to 47 months	6.0%	94.6%
48 to 59 months	2.7%	97.3%
60 months or more	2.7%	100.0%
Average Length of Service	15.8 months	
Number of Cases	3,780	

SOURCE: See Table 2.1.

NOTE: Virtually all (99.8 percent) of the most recent episodes in the sample were still open in September 1986. Some sample members (6.3 percent) were in the middle of GA-U episodes in January 1980, the first month of the data collection period.

the average length of GA-U use increased with the number of episodes. Table 2.1 displays the number of GA-U episodes experienced by sample members and the average length of GA-U use by number of episodes.

The average GA-U case in the July 1986 sample had 2.1 GA-U episodes and received GA-U assistance for an average of 15.8 months. Fifty-four percent of all recipients had one episode of GA-U use -- almost nine percent had five or more episodes. Table 2.2 displays the frequency distribution of total length of GA-U use across all episodes between January 1980 and September 1986. Almost all of the cases (99.8 percent) were still open at the end of the data collection period.

When more than one episode was found, the gap between episodes was usually short. The average gap between episodes was five months. However, 55 percent of all gaps between episodes lasted less than one month, and only 24 percent lasted six months or more.

This report counts episodes from an administrative perspective rather than the recipient's perspective. Many of the shortest gaps did nt cause any interruption in payments. ecipients might well perceive two such administrative episodes as one continuous one.

Administrative episodes can be created in a number of ways. Case reading revealed that grants were often closed and then reopened when physicians statements or reports on participation in treatment were not received within program deadlines. New episodes can also be created if recipients move without notifying their CSO. Although these interruptions do not always cause a loss of payments to the recipient, they do create new GA-U episodes in client history data.

Some short gaps did represent real interruptions of payments. Some involved sanctions for failure to cooperate with treatment. There is no way of knowing how many of these short interruptions involved sanctions, but the number of sanctions was probably small. According to case records some sanctions were initiated because forms indicating cooperation with treatment had not been supplied. After sanctions were threatened, forms were often supplied. Sanctions were then rescinded.

Length of GA-U Use by Incapacity

Seventeen different types of incapacity can be identified on SSPS forms. The forms provide space to indicate one primary and one secondary incapacity. Incapacity figures

in this section treat recipients as having an incapacity when it is listed as the primary <u>or</u> secondary incapacity on SSPS records.

Detailed incapacity codes have been grouped into four categories: physical incapacities, mental illness, substance abuse (alcohol or drug), and mental retardation. Table 2.3 displays the overall length and number of GA-U episodes for sample members by incapacity (primary or secondary). Cases for which SSPS incapacity data could not be found are reported separately.

Recipients with mental health incapacities used GA-U the longest, on average, while those with physical incapacities and substance abuse incapacities used GA-U for the shortest length of time. The number of GA-U episodes was also related to incapacity.Those with substance abuse and men-l health incapacities had the most administrative episodes.

These patterns are explained, in part, by differences in out-of-state residency, differences in recipient behaviors, and differences in administrative handling of groups with different incapacities.

Only 56 percent of those with substance abuse incapacities lived in Washington State for the full 81 months between January 1980 and September 1986. Seventy percent of those with mental health incapacities, and 72 percent of those with mental retardation or physical incapacities lived in Washington during the full data collection period. Groups with longer continuous residency in Washington State had greater opportunity for long assistance use.

Case reading suggested that individuals with mental health and substance abuse incapacities were more likely to move than other recipients, and had more difficulty in keeping appointments and returning forms. This probably contributed to the relatively high number of administrative episodes for these groups.

Administrative practices also tend to influence the number of episodes created. Clients with substance abuse and mental health problems were more likely to face treatment requirements than other clients, leading to an increased possibility of interruption through sanctions.

Finally, redetermination schedules tend to produce additional administrative episodes for substance abuse clients. Recipients whose primary incapacity is substance abuse are re-examined for medical eligibility every three months. Recipients with mental illness or mental retardation incapacities are more likely to be reexamined annually.

TABLE 2.3

LENGTH OF GA-U USE AND NUMBER OF GA-U EPISODES BETWEEN JANUARY 1980 AND SEPTEMBER 1986 FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 WARRANT ROLL, BY INCAPACITY

LENGTH OF SERVICE	Physical	Mental Illness	Substance Abuse	Mental Retardation	Incapacity Uknown
Frequency Distribution:					
One to five months	31.1%	22.3%	31.4%	18.9%	41.7%
Six to eleven months	24.6%	19.3%	23.3%	25.2%	18.8%
12 to 23 months	23.6%	26.0%	24.0%	37.0%	19.6%
24 months or more	20.7%	32.4%	21.3%	18.9%	19.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average Length (months)	15.2	19.9	15.1	16.2	14.0
NUMBER OF EPISODES					
Frequency Distribution:					
One	60.8%	51.4%	44.3%	66.7%	55.4%
Two	20.2%	20.5%	21.2%	17.1%	19.1%
Three	9.0%	11.9%	12.1%	4.5%	10.6%
Four	4.4%	7.5%	7.9%	5.4%	5.4%
Five or more	5.6%	8.7%	14.5%	6.3%	9.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average Number of Episodes	1.8	2.2	2.5	1.8	2.1
NUMBER OF SAMPLE CASES	1,308	1,036	949	111	744

SOURCE: See Table 2.1.

NOTES: Incapactiy categories are based on primary and seconday incapacities. Sample sizes for incapactiy groups sum to more than 3,780 because some individuals have more than one type of incapacity.

Cases with unknown incapacities did not have Social Service Payment System records.

Recipients with substance abuse problems are more likely to have multiple episodes than other recipients because they face redetermination more often.

Changes in Length of Use Over Time

Length of GA-U use data from the July 1986 sample can be compared with length of use statistics collected in a 1982 GA-U study to determine how length of use has changed over time. The 1982 study collected information on the number of months that a sample of June 1982 recipients had used GA-U in all GA-U episodes during the previous five years. 2/

Length of GA-U use appears to have declined somewhat from an average of 16.5 months out of the previous 60 measured in 1982 to an average of 15.8 months out of the previous 81 measured in this study. This drop in average length of use occurred due to an increase in the number of substance abuse cases, which had a shorter than average length of GA-U use.

Length of GA-U use by recipients with substance abuse incapacities has increased substantially since 1982, although it remains shorter than length of use for recipients with other incapacities. Length of use increased by 29 percent, from 10.8 months to 13.9 months, for recipients with substance abuse as a primary incapacity. This increase would have increased overall length of use if the proportion of recipients with substance abuse incapacities had not been increasing at the same time.

Length of GA-U use remained unchanged or dropped slightly between 1982 and 1986 for recipients with physical, mental health, and mental retardation primary incapacities. Table 2.4 displays length of GA-U use by primary incapacity and the proportion of the caseload with each incapacity in June 1982 and July 1986.

2/ Data for 1982 were gathered from a random sample of 377 cases identified from the June 1982 Warrant Roll. Data were gathered from financial and social services case records by DSHS staff in the Division of Medical Assistance and Division of Income Assistance.

The 1982 study collected data on only one incapacity per person. Comparisons with 1982 data are therefore based on the primary incapacities identified for July 1986 cases, rather than primary and secondary incapacities.

TABLE 2.4

LENGTH OF GA-U USE FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 AND JUNE 1982 WARRANT ROLLS, BY PRIMARY INCAPACITY

SAMPLE PERIOD	Physical	Mental Illness	Substance Abuse	Mental Retardation	Total
July 1986:					
81 Months of History Data Average Length (months)	15.0	19.9	13.9	16.6	15.8
Percent of Caseload	39.7%	31.4%	26.2%	2.7%	100.0%
Number of Cases	1,205	954	795	82	3,780
June 1982:					
60 Months of History Data Average Length (months)	15.0	20.4	10.8	17.9	16.5
Percent of Caseload	43.5%	38.6%	15.7%	2.2%	100.0%
Number of Cases	161	143	58	8	370

SOURCE: See Table 2.1 for July 1986 Data. July 1982 data were obtained from "GA-U Program: Preliminary Report", prepared by the Division of Medical Assistance and Division of Income Assistance, February 10, 1983.

NOTES: July 1986 length of use data and percent of caseload figures for individual incapacities are based on all cases for which primary incapacity was known. Primary incapacity was not known for 744 cases, with an average length of use of 14.0 months. These 744 cases are included in the total column. July 1982 data contained incapacity information for all cases.

July 1986 length of use for individual incapacities is probably shorter than shown here since cases with unknown incapacities had shorter than average length of use.

Length of GA-U Use By Age and Sex

Long-term users of GA-U tended to be older: between the ages of 40 and 59. GA-U recipients under the age of 21 and over the age of 60 had the shortest durations on assistance. Those over 60 years of age were the most likely to qualify for SSI.

Women had fewer, but longer, episodes of assistance. As noted in the Characteristics Report, women on the GA-U caseload were much more likely than men to have been incapacitated by mental illness. Men were more likely to have substance abuse problems. Patterns of GA-U use by men and women reflect these differences. Table 2.5 displays average length of GA-U use and average number of episodes by age and sex.

When all forms of public assistance are considered, women had even longer histories of assistance use than men because of participation in the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program.

Participation in Other Assistance Programs

This section focuses on prior use of other assistance programs by July 1986 GA-U recipients. Most of the client history data collected for this sample concerns use in prior periods, not future periods. Movement of GA-U recipients from the GA-U program to the federal SSI program will be described more fully in Chapter 3.

While July 1986 GA-U recipients had used other assistance programs, such use was not common. Eight percent of July 1986 GA-U recipients used AFDC between January 1980 and September 1986. Almost two percent had used the Consolidated Emergency Assistance Program, an emergency assistance program providing cash grants for one month to households with children. One percent had used had used Refugee Cash Assistance. Two percent had used SSI, some of them prior to and some after July 1986. 3/

3/ The percent of cases entering the SSI program before and after July 1986 cannot be accurately determined from analysis files.

These figures should not be confused with the percent of SSI or AFDC recipients who used GA-U in the past. No data are available on past GA-U use by recipients in other programs.

TABLE 2.5

AVERAGE LENGTH OF GA-U USE AND NUMBER OF GA-U EPISODES BETWEEN JANUARY 1980 AND SEPTEMBER 1986 FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 WARRANT ROLL, BY AGE AND SEX

CHARACTERISTIC	Average Months	Average Episodes	Number of Cases
Age:			
18 to 20	6.9	1.3	159
21 to 29	13.6	1.9	1,015
30 to 39	15.9	2.3	1,052
40 to 49	17.5	2.2	762
50 to 59	19.9	2.2	655
60 and over	13.7	1.6	133
Total	15.8	2.1	3,776
Sex:			
Male	15.3	2.2	2,409
Female	16.8	1.8	1,371
Total	15.8	2.1	3,780

SOURCE: See Table 2.1

NOTES: Age is defined as of July 1, 1986. Information on age is missing for four recipients.

Women were much more likely to have used other forms of assistance than men, mainly through the AFDC program. Table 2.6 displays the percent of men and women using other income assistance programs, and average duration of assistance.

Many GA-U recipients (54 percent) who used AFDC between January 1980 and September 1986 were over 40 years of age. These older recipients are unable to qualify for AFDC because their children are grown or have left home. Younger parents may have children who are in foster care or living with other relatives temporarily. Case reading identified some cases in which GA-U recipients transferred to the AFDC program when they regained custody of their children.

TABLE 2.6

USE OF OTHER INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
BETWEEN JANUARY 1980 AND SEPTEMBER 1986
BY MEN AND WOMEN USING GA-U IN JULY 1986

PROGRAM	Men	Women	Total
Aid to Families With Dependent Children			
Regular	2.6%	17.1%	7.9%
Employable	0.4%	0.9%	0.6%
Total	2.8%	17.4%	8.1%
Supplemental Security Income a/			
Disabled	1.9%	2.3%	2.0%
Aged	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	2.0%	2.4%	2.1%
Emergency Assistance	0.6%	3.4%	1.6%
Refugee Cash Assistance	0.7%	1.8%	1.1%
General Assistance for Pregnant Women	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%
Any Cash Assistance	5.4%	21.4%	11.2%
NUMBER OF SAMPLE CASES	2,409	1,371	3,780

SOURCE: See Table 2.1.

NOTE: a/ Recipients in this sample either used SSI prior to July 1986 or moved to SSI in August or September 1986. Figures on movement to SSI for cases with more substantial lengths of follow-up are presented in Chapter 3. See Table 3.2.

CHAPTER 3: USE BY CASES OPENED IN 1983

This chapter describes the payment histories of GA-U cases opened in November and December of 1983 to describe length of assistance use and movement to the federal SSI program. Cases were selected from the January 1984 Warrant Roll.

Study of cases opened in late 1983 has several advantages. All cases have the same potential length of assistance use in Washington State -- 34 to 35 months. The experiences of these cases can be used to predict the effects of placing time limits on length of assistance use. Study of cases opened in late 1983 also provides several years in which to observe movement to the SSI program. SSI approvals were observed over the 32 months following January 1984.

Findings on length of GA-U use include:

- Cases that opened late in 1983 used GA-U for an average of 12.4 months (combining all episodes) during the three year follow-up period. Forty percent used GA-U for 12 months or more and 17 percent used GA-U for 24 months or more. Over one-third of all cases were still active in September 1986, the last month of follow-up.

- Recipients with mental illness as a primary incapacity used GA-U the longest among those entering the program in late 1983. Fifty-one percent of all recipients with mental illness incapacities used GA-U benefits for 12 months or more. Twenty-six percent used GA-U for 24 months or more.

Findings on movement to the SSI program include:

- Eighteen percent of the GA-U cases that opened in late 1983 entered the SSI program during the 32 months following January 1984.

- SSI participation among GA-U recipients whose cases opened in late 1983 was highest among those with mental illness as a primary incapacity (32 percent). Only seven percent of those with substance abuse incapacities entered the SSI program.

- SSI participation increased with length of GA-U use, from 11 percent of those using GA-U for less than six months to 18 percent of those using GA-U for six to 11 months, and 27 percent of those using GA-U for 12 to 23 months.

- The SSI participation rate for those using GA-U for 24 months or more (22 percent) was lower than for those using GA-U for 12 to 23 months. This suggests that efforts to move GA-U cases to SSI are reduced once a recipient has been on assistance 24 months or more. Such recipients may have had one or more SSI applications rejected.

Length of GA-U Use for Cases Opened in 1983

This section follows the payment histories of GA-U recipients whose cases opened between November 15, 1983 and December 31, 1983, selected from the January 1984 Warrant Roll. 1/ Payment histories were collected for the year prior to opening, plus the 34 to 35 months that followed. Table 3.1 displays length of GA-U use by primary incapacity for this group. 2/ The average length of GA-U use was 12.4 months out of the potential 34 months.

Recipients with mental illness or mental retardation as primary incapacities used GA-U the longest -- and those with substance abuse incapacities the shortest -- over the 34 months of follow-up. Figures for the mentally retarded are based on only 17 cases. This small number of cases may not accurately reflect the characteristics of all mentally retarded GA-U users.

1/ The cases studied here are not a truly random sample of new openings. It is made up of "cases on the January 1984 Warrant Roll which opened between November 15 and December 31, 1983." Some of the cases opened during that six week period may have closed before the January Warrant Roll cut-off date. Others may not yet have been placed on the regular Warrant Roll. Cases which were not on the regular Warrant Roll were not tracked.

2/ Incapacity data for these cases come from family characteristics codes recorded in Warrant Roll files. Prior to mid-1985, these are the only data available in department computer records. Audits of these codes suggest that they were missing or wrong approximately 18 percent of the time in 1982.

TABLE 3.1

LENGTH OF GA-U USE FOR CASES OPENED IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER OF 1983, BY PRIMARY INCAPACITY

LENGTH OF SERVICE	Physical	Substance Abuse	Mental Illness	Mental Retardation	All Cases
One month or less	2.0%	2.5%	1.2%	5.9%	2.0%
Two to five months	38.5%	37.5%	20.7%	23.5%	33.9%
Six to eleven months	23.7%	24.0%	27.2%	11.8%	24.3%
12 to 23 months	21.8%	22.9%	25.3%	17.6%	22.8%
24 to 35 months	14.0%	13.1%	25.6%	41.2%	17.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
AVERAGE LENGTH OF SERVICE (in Months)	11.4	11.3	15.1	18.0	12.4
NUMBER OF CASES	592	442	324	17	1,406

SOURCE: Records of Assistance Paid data for cases opening between November 15, 1983 and December 31, 1983, as identified in the January 1984 Warrant Roll.

NOTES: Length of service includes all GA-U episodes between the sampled opening and September 1986. This table under-represents the number of cases with total GA-U use of less than six weeks, since cases that opened after November 15th and closed before being placed on the January Warrant Roll are not included in the table.

Length of service information is missing for 24 cases. Primary incapacity data are missing for 31 cases. These cases are included in the "All Cases" column.

A large fraction of the GA-U recipients in the sample -- 39 percent -- used GA-U for 12 months or more. Long-term GA-U use was highest for the mentally retarded and mentally ill. Fifty-nine percent of the mentally retarded and 51 percent of the mentally ill used GA-U for 12 months or more during the 34 months of follow-up.

Seventeen percent of sample members -- including 26 percent of the mentally ill and 41 percent of the mentally retarded -- used GA-U for 24 months or more. These groups would be the most affected by any changes that placed limits on duration of GA-U assistance.

Movement to the SSI Program

The mentally ill and mentally retarded were also the most likely to be accepted into the SSI program. Fifty-eight percent of the mentally retarded and 32 percent of the mentally ill in the sample eventually moved to SSI, but not before they had used GA-U for long periods of time.

Many factors influence the proportion of cases moving to SSI, including the rates of referrals to SSI by GA-U program staff, actual rates of SSI application, and rates at which applications are approved. Unfortunately, existing data bases provide little or no information on these factors. This section describes the percent of all GA-U recipients who were approved for SSI.

Table 3.2 shows the percent of sample members who moved to SSI during the 32 months following January 1984, by primary incapacity. Table 3.2 also shows acceptance rates by length of GA-U use to illustrate patterns of movement to SSI. The percent of GA-U cases accepted by SSI increased over the first 23 months following case opening, and then decreased.

Movement to SSI varied significantly by incapacity. Case movement was highest for those with mental retardation incapacities, followed by those with mental illness incapacities. Movement to SSI was lower for those with physical and substance abuse incapacities. The decrease in movement to SSI after 24 months of GA-U use was caused by reduced movement of cases with physical and substance abuse incapacities.

These patterns can be explained, in part, by SSI referral patterns observed during case reading. Case reading revealed that GA-U applicants whose incapacities were expected to be permanent generally were required to apply for

TABLE 3.2

MOVEMENT TO SSI BY GA-U CASES OPENED IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER OF 1983, BY PRIMARY INCAPACITY AND LENGTH OF GA-U USE

SSI MOVEMENT	Physical	Substance Abuse	Mental Illness	Mental Retardation	All Cases
Percent Moved to SSI	18.2%	6.8%	32.1%	58.8%	18.2%
Number of Cases	617	473	343	17	1,482
Percent Moved to SSI by Months of GA-U Use:					
Less than 6 Months	12.9%	1.7%	21.1%	60.0%	10.7%
6 to 11 Months	16.4%	4.7%	34.1%	50.0%	17.6%
12 to 23 Months	29.5%	16.8%	35.4%	66.7%	27.1%
24 Months or More	15.7%	6.5%	34.9%	57.1%	21.8%
Number of Cases	592	442	324	17	1,406

SOURCE: See Table 3.1.

NOTES: Primary incapacity codes are missing for 32 cases. These cases are included in the "All Cases" column.

SSI opening data were available for all Warrant Roll cases, regardless of whether valid GA-U payment histories could be constructed.

Data on length of GA-U use are missing for 24 cases. Data on primary incapacity are missing for 31 of the cases with GA-U use data.

SSI and certified for the GA-U program for one year. However, few cases were approved for SSI on the first application.

Cases still open at the end of the first period of medical eligibility were redetermined. Recipients with long-term incapacities were usually required to apply for SSI again. In some cases, the first SSI application was not initiated until the first GA-U redetermination, when the potential length of the recipient's incapacity was re-evaluated.

A third round of SSI applications sometimes occurred at the time of the third GA-U redetermination if the case was still open and staff believed that a new SSI application might be accepted.

The drop in movement to SSI after 24 months of assistance may result from judgements made by CSO staff that further SSI applications were unwarranted for some long-term recipients.

The average length of GA-U use for those accepted by SSI was 15 months. Over half of those accepted by the SSI program used GA-U for more than 12 months. Recipients who moved to SSI over the 32 months of follow-up had longer GA-U histories than those who did. Table 3.3 shows the average length of GA-U use for those who moved to SSI and those who did not.

Proposals to limit the amount of time that GA-U benefits may be received should be be drafted carefully to make sure that cases with long-term incapacities are not terminated before they can enter the SSI program.

TABLE 3.3

LENGTH OF GA-U USE BY CASES OPENED IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER OF 1983, BY PRIMARY INCAPACITY AND MOVEMENT TO THE SSI PROGRAM

MOVEMENT STATUS	Physical	Substance Abuse	Mental Illness	Mental Retardation	All Cases
Movers to SSI:					
Average Length of GA-U Use (Months)	13.0	16.3	16.1	18.2	14.9
Percent Using GA-U for More than 12 Months	48.6%	72.4%	56.3%	60.0%	54.9%
Number of Cases	105	29	103	10	253
Non-Movers to SSI:					
Average Length of GA-U Use (Months)	11.1	10.9	14.7	17.7	11.8
Percent Using GA-U for More than 12 Months	33.1%	38.0%	48.4%	57.1%	36.5%
Number of Cases	487	413	221	7	1,153

SOURCE: See Table 3.1.

NOTE: Data on length of GA-U use are missing for 24 cases. Data on primary incapacity codes are missing for 31 cases -- six cases which moved to the SSI program and 25 cases that did not. These cases are included in the "All Cases" column.

CHAPTER 4: CHANGES IN CHARACTERISTICS OF CASE OPENINGS

The Characteristics Report described increases in the number of GA-U recipients with substance abuse incapacities and increases in in-migration. These can be documented clearly by looking at trends in the characteristics of case openings.

Study of cases as they open gives a more accurate picture of the characteristics of all program users than study of caseloads at any given point in time. Statistics based on counts of case openings are not biased by differences in the average length of assistance use. Cross-sectional views of program caseloads always include more long-term users and fewer short-term users than one would observe if one looked at all program entrants.

This chapter describes six groups of recipients approved for GAU assistance within six weeks of January 1, or July 1, 1984, 1985, and 1986. Samples were identified from the Warrant Rolls for those months. 1/ Findings include:

- The percent of new GA-U cases involving substance abuse as the primary incapacity has increased -- from one-third at the end of 1983 to close to 40 percent in mid-1986.

- Persons with primary incapacities of substance abuse made up less than 28 percent of the July 1986 caseload because of their shorter than average length of assistance use.

1/ The samples of new opening used in this chapter are not truely random samples of new openings. They are "cases on a Warrant Roll which opened within six weeks of the Warrant Roll month." Some of the cases that opened during the six week periods may have closed prior to the Warrant Roll month. Others may not yet have been placed on the regular Warrant Roll. Cases which were not on the regular Warrant Roll were not included in the samples used in this chapter.

- The percent of GA-U openings involving recent in-migrants to Washington State has increased since 1983. Six percent of the cases opened during the last six weeks of 1983 involved recipients who had been in Washington for 3 months or less. By mid-1986 this figure had increased to 13 percent.

- The percent of case openings involving people who had used the GA-U program in the previous year varied between 36 and 41 percent across the six time periods but showed no clear trend.

Changes in Incapacities

The percent of GA-U openings involving substance abuse as a primary incapacity increased from approximately 33 percent to almost 43 percent between late 1983 and mid-1986, based on Warrant Roll family characteristics codes. The percent of openings involving substance abuse as a primary incapacity increased in SSPS data as well during the period for which SSPS data are available.

Table 4.1 displays changes in primary incapacities among opened cases using both Warrant Roll and SSPS data to show that the trend toward more frequent substance abuse incapacities is present in both data sources.

While persons with a primary incapacity of substance abuse made up an average of 36 percent of all openings in the six periods, they made up less than 28 percent of all recipients on the July 1986 Warrant Roll. 2/ This occurred because recipients with substance abuse incapacities used GA-U for shorter periods than other recipients, and illustrates the different perspective obtained by looking at openings over time rather than cases open at a single point in time.

2/ The average for all six periods was 35.7 percent according to SSPS data for the three periods since mid-1985. The average was 36.3 percent for all six cohorts according to Warrant Roll data.

Figures for the July 1986 caseload were 25.7 percent according to SSPS data and 27.8 percent according to Warrant Roll data.

TABLE 4.1

PRIMARY INCAPACITIES OF GA-U RECIPIENTS, BY DATE OF OPENING

OPENING DATE / DATA SOURCE	Physical	Substance Abuse	Mental Illness	Mental Retardation	Number of Cases
Nov. 15, 1983 to Dec. 31, 1983					
Warrant Roll	42.7%	32.5%	23.6%	1.2%	1,398
May 15, 1984 to June 30, 1984					
Warrant Roll	40.7%	34.3%	23.9%	1.1%	1,293
Nov. 15, 1984 to Dec. 31, 1984					
Warrant Roll	38.4%	33.1%	26.6%	1.9%	1,536
May 15, 1985 to June 30, 1985					
Warrant Roll	37.2%	36.0%	25.5%	1.3%	1,815
Social Service Payment System	41.7%	31.8% a/	25.1%	1.4%	1,404
Nov. 15, 1985 to Dec. 31, 1985					
Warrant Roll	34.7%	39.4%	23.6%	2.3%	1,575
Social Service Payment System	37.1%	38.2%	22.5%	2.2%	1,211
May 15, 1986 to June 30, 1986					
Warrant Roll	33.3%	42.6%	23.1%	1.0%	2,039
Social Service Payment System	36.4%	37.1%	25.4%	1.1%	1,546

SOURCE: Warrant Roll and Records of Assistance Paid data for GA-U recipients whose cases were opened in specified periods. Cases were identified as GA-U recipients in the Warrant Rolls for January and July 1984, 1985, and 1986, respectively.

NOTES: Incapacity data are for primary incapacity only. Sample sizes are based on the number of Warrant Roll cases in each cohort with valid incapacity codes. Social Service Payment System incapacity data are regarded as more accurate than Warrant Roll data by GA-U program staff. However, see footnote a/ below.

Samples for Social Service Payment System data are lower than for Warrant Roll codes because Social Service Payment System records could not be found for some cases.

a/ Some of the increase in substance abuse incapacities in Social Service Payment System data after mid-1985 probably resulted from staff training.

Changes in Washington Residency

Examination of newly opened cases also helps to show changes in the length of residence of GA-U recipients. The percent of cases opened within three months of arrival in Washington State more than doubled between late 1983 and mid-1986 -- from 5.8 percent to 12.6 percent. Most of the increase came between the end of 1984 and mid-1985. Data on length of residency for each sample are shown in Table 4.2.

Changes in Prior Use of GA-U Assistance

Some GA-U recipients leave Washington State only to return and re-enter the program. The proportion of GA-U openings involving people who used GA-U within the prior year has not dropped. This proportion increased slightly after 1984 at the same time that use by recent in-migrants was increasing. Some of those who arrived and applied for GA-U in Washington probably had been here and used GA-U in the past. Data on prior use of GA-U assistance are displayed in Table 4.3.

Data on GA-U openings were examined for changes in age, sex, and geographic location, but no clear patterns were identified.

TABLE 4.2

ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON STATE OF GA-U RECPIENTS, BY DATE OF OPENING

OPENING DATE	Percent of Cases Opening Within: 3 Months of Arrival	One Year of Arrival	Five Years of Arrival	Number of Cases
Nov. 15, 1983 to Dec. 31, 1983	5.8%	14.0%	34.3%	1,238
May 15, 1984 to June 30, 1984	4.4%	9.1%	28.4%	1,057
Nov. 15, 1984 to Dec. 31, 1984	5.8%	11.5%	30.9%	1,222
May 15, 1985 to June 30, 1985	11.0%	18.4%	34.1%	1,406
Nov. 15, 1985 to Dec. 31, 1985	10.9%	19.6%	36.4%	1,285
May 15, 1986 to June 30, 1986	12.6%	19.7%	36.3%	1,553

SOURCE: See Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.3

PRIOR GA-U USE BY GA-U RECPIENTS, BY DATE OF OPENING

OPENING DATE	Percent Using GA-U in Past Year	Number of Cases
Nov. 15, 1983 to Dec. 31, 1983	40.3%	1,430
May 15, 1984 to June 30, 1984	36.3%	1,325
Nov. 15, 1984 to Dec. 31, 1984	36.0%	1,578
May 15, 1985 to June 30, 1985	36.8%	1,836
Nov. 15, 1985 to Dec. 31, 1985	39.6%	1,671
May 15, 1986 to June 30, 1986	40.8%	551

SOURCE: See Table 4.1.

APPENDIX A

Construction of GA-U Payment Histories from Records of Assistance Paid Data

Records of Assistance Paid (RAPs) data provide information on each opening, closing, regular warrant, one-time payment, cancellation of a warrant, and change in payment amount for households participating in Washington assistance programs. They provide information on all cash assistance programs used, and authorization records for medical assistance for those not participating in cash programs.

RAPs data are requested by history pointer. History pointers are assigned to cases when they are opened, and follow households as they move from program to program or change residence.

Computer programs were written to calculate the number of separate episodes of GA-U use by each client. Calculated data include the number and length of GA-U episodes, length of gaps between episodes, total length of all GA-U episodes combined, dollars per episode and total dollars paid.

Data were also collected on other assistance programs used by GA-U recipients. This makes it possible to identify GA-U recipients who entered the SSI program. It also allows descriptions of participation in other programs such as AFDC.

Sampling GA-U Cases

The GA-U cases examined in this report were gathered from Warrant Roll files. Warrant Rolls are the monthly lists of cases for which assistance checks are produced by DSHS computers in Olympia.

Some GA-U payments are made outside of the Warrant Roll system through one-time grants. Recipients may get one-time grants during the month that their grant is opened because there is not enough time to enter them into Warrant Roll lists. As a result, Warrant Roll files do not include all people receiving assistance in a given month.

The use of Warrant Roll files to identify cases for analysis means that cases with the very shortest lengths of assistance will not be included. Comparison of Warrant Roll case counts with counts of all cases using assistance indicate that eight to nine percent of those using GA-U in a given month are not on that month's Warrant Roll. Most of the cases that have not entered the Warrant Roll probably have less than one month of assistance use in their current GA-U episode.

Length of use statistics presented in this report are accurate for cases that have entered the Warrant Roll, but probably overstate length of use for all GA-U recipients.

Sampling GA-U Openings

GA-U openings were sampled by selecting cases from Warrant Roll files that opened within six weeks of the Warrant Roll month. This means that those cases which opened within the six week period but had not yet been added to Warrant Roll files were not sampled. It also means that cases that opened and closed within the six weeks prior to the Warrant Roll month were not sampled.

While procedures used in this study provide the best picture of GA-U openings currently available, the picture could be biased. The direction of the bias is unknown. It depends on whether the characteristics of cases which do not get onto the Warrant Roll within six weeks differ substantially from those that do, and on how many cases open and close within six weeks without entering the Warrant Roll.

Measuring GA-U Episodes

RAPS data do not provide a perfect picture of GA-U episodes. Some cases were missing opening or closing records. Programmers on the GA-U Characteristics Study staff suspect that the programs used to construct and measure episodes created extra episodes due to these data quality problems.

Cases in which any episode had closing dates that preceded opening dates are excluded from analysis files. However, some cases with suspicious episodes could not be excluded. Two percent of all GA-U episodes created by project computer programs have no dollars attached to them and no reasonable explanation for the lack of payments.

The impact of these data quality problems is probably small, at least when cases on Warrant Roll files are compared. The length of the current GA-U episode measured through RAPs data is quite similar to the length of current GA-U episodes measured from opening dates on the July 1986 Warrant Roll, as shown in Table A2.1.

When the length of GA-U episodes calculated from RAPs data is compared with Average Grant reports on GA-U episodes, the situation is less clear. Average Grant reports count all recipients in a given month, whether on the Warrant Roll or not.

Average grant reports for closed GA-U cases suggest that 25 percent of all GA-U episodes close within two weeks. This pattern was not observed in Warrant Roll data or in case reading. However, use of the Warrant Roll to identify cases for study would not allow us to observe such cases if they did exist. Cases that close within two weeks of opening would be unlikely to show up in any Warrant Roll file.

Examination of RAPS data suggests that the Average Grant reports could create short episodes by mistake when cases close and reopen in the same month. The opening date of the second episode is often dated prior to the closing date of the first episode in history system files. Programs that compare closing dates with the most recent opening date on file could create large numbers of short, and spurious, episodes. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine how many of the short episodes in average grant reports are real and how many are artifacts of data tracking systems.

Gaps in Payment Histories

The creation of extra episodes may be partially offset through the loss of some episodes due to gaps in the client history system.

Some clients may not have complete client histories if other family members have also used assistance. The client history pointers used to track payment histories cannot follow both halves of a family when families split up. When families split up, the person living in the original dwelling usually retains the original history pointer and the person moving out gets a new one.

Clients may also get new history pointers if more than three years have elapsed between episodes.

TABLE A2.1

LENGTH OF GA-U USE IN THE MOST RECENT GA-U EPISODE
ACCORDING TO CLIENT HISTORY SYSTEM AND WARRANT ROLL DATA,
FOR RECIPIENTS ON THE JULY 1986 WARRANT ROLL

	Most Recent Episode From Client History System Data		Current Episode From Warrant Roll Opening Dates	
LENGTH OF SERVICE	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Percent	Cumulative Percent
One month or less	8.0%	8.0%	9.0%	9.0%
Two to five months	44.6%	52.6%	43.3%	52.3%
Six to eleven months	25.4%	78.0%	25.6%	77.9%
12 to 23 months	15.2%	93.2%	15.3%	93.2%
24 to 35 months	4.3%	97.5%	4.3%	97.5%
36 to 47 months	1.4%	98.9%	1.4%	98.9%
48 to 59 months	0.6%	99.5%	0.6%	99.5%
60 months or more	0.5%	100.0%	0.5%	100.0%
Average Length of Service	9.1 months		8.5 months	
Number of Cases	3,780		3,780	

SOURCE: Client History System Records of Assistance Paid between January 1980 and September 1986 and Warrant Roll opening dates for a random sample of 4,051 GA-U cases on the July 1986 Warrant Roll. Records of Assistance Paid data could not be analyzed for 271 cases, which are not included in this table.

NOTES: Length of use based on Records of Assistance Paid is through September 30, 1986 or the last closing date on record. Length of use based on Warrant Roll opening dates is through July 31, 1986.

Virtually all (99.8 percent) of the most recent episodes defined through Records of Assistance Paid were open in September 1986. A few cases (1.2 percent) had current episodes which began during or after July 1986. The episodes identified in Records of Assistance Paid data are probably different than the episodes measured in Warrant Roll data for those cases. Some sample members (6.3 percent) were in the middle of GA-U episodes in January 1980, the first month of the data collection period.

Warrant Roll episode length measured in this table differs from figures reported in the Characteristics Report in two respects. First, episode length is measured through July 31, 1986 instead of July 1, 1986. Second, data are reported on all Warrant Roll cases, regardless of whether SSPS data were available for them. The Characteristics Report presented data only for cases for which SSPS data could be located. This increases average length of use, since SSPS data tended to be missing for recently opened cases.

The average length of assistance use in this sample for cases with SSPS data was 9.4 months according to Records of Assistance Paid data and 8.9 months according to Warrant Roll opening dates. The average length of assistance use, through July 31, 1986, for all July 1986 Warrant Roll cases with SSPS data was 9.3 months according to Warrant Roll opening dates.

Measurement of SSI Use

SSI checks do not pass through the Warrant Roll system. As a result, they do not appear within the Client History System. However, DSHS does issue a lump sum check to SSI recipients through the Warrant Roll system soon after they are first approved.

SSI pays benefits from the date of application. DSHS requires GA-U recipients who apply for SSI to reimburse the state for GA-U payments made during the application process. When a GA-U recipient is approved for SSI, he or she receives a lump-sum check for retroactive benefits. This check is always larger than the amount of GA-U paid during the application period, since SSI payment standards are higher than GA-U payment standard.

The lump sum SSI check is assigned to DSHS and DSHS issues the recipient a settlement check for the difference between the amount of GA-U benefits owed and SSI benefits paid. This check is issued through the Warrant Roll system and can be identified in RAPs data. SSI participation is identified in this report through the presence of SSI reimbursement checks in payment files.

Merging Warrant Roll and SSPS Data with Payment History Data

Warrant Roll files in the Characteristics Report were merged with SSPS data on primary and secondary incapacity, treatment referrals and referrals to other programs. Warrant Roll files for July 1985, January 1986 and July 1986 used in this report are also merged with SSPS data. SSPS data files do not contain GA-U program information for merging with earlier Warrant Rolls.

There is one important difference between merged Warrant Roll-SSPS files used in the Longitudinal Report and those used in the Characteristics Report. Files used in the Characteristics Report included only those cases with both Warrant Roll and SSPS data. Files used in this report contain all Warrant Roll cases, regardless of whether SSPS data could be found for them.

Analysis of the Warrant Roll-SSPS files used in the Characteristics Study indicated that those files under-represented cases with short lengths of stay. Since length of stay is the primary focus of this report, all Warrant Roll cases are used in analyses that do not require use of SSPS variables.