

**REPORT BY THE
AUDITOR GENERAL
OF CALIFORNIA**

**AN ANALYSIS OF SANCTIONS IN THE
GENERAL RELIEF/GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
OF SIX COUNTIES**

**An Analysis of Sanctions in the
General Relief/General Assistance Programs
of Six Counties**

P-009, August 1991

**Office of the Auditor General
California**



Kurt R. Sjoberg, Auditor General (acting)

State of California
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone : (916) 445-0255

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P-009

Honorable Robert J. Campbell, Chairman
Members, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
State Capitol, Room 2163
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members:

The Office of the Auditor General presents its report concerning the use of sanctions within the counties' General Relief/General Assistance programs. We focused our review in six counties with large numbers of general relief recipients: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties. In addition, the report provides summary information about the use of sanctions in the other 52 counties. The report shows that policies for sanctioning general relief recipients vary significantly among the counties.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kurt R. Sjoberg".

KURT R. SJOBERG
Auditor General (acting)

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Summary

Results in Brief State law requires each county in California to provide assistance to indigent residents who are not supported by their friends or relatives or by state or private institutions. Counties provide this support through their General Relief/General Assistance (general relief) programs. Each county is responsible for adopting specific policies and procedures for the operation of its general relief program. We focused our review on six counties: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Clara. These counties represented approximately 78 percent of the State's general relief caseload as of June 30, 1991. We reviewed the reasons recipients were sanctioned from the program, the number of sanctions imposed, and the duration of the sanctions. We found the following conditions:

- The counties' policies for sanctioning general relief recipients vary significantly. Three of the six counties sanction recipients only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of their general relief programs; the other three counties sanction recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of their general relief programs;
- Even in the counties that sanction for other than work program requirements, noncompliance with the work program requirements accounted for 45 percent of the sanctions in those counties;
- The percentage of cases sanctioned by the counties varies. During our review period, July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the counties imposed sanctions

on a monthly average ranging from 11 percent of the total cases subject to sanction in one county to 63 percent in another county, based on data available from four counties;

- The counties rescinded a significant number of sanctions when the recipients corrected the issue of noncompliance or provided an explanation for not complying with the counties' regulations. The counties rescinded a range of 12 percent of the sanctions imposed in one county to 36 percent in another county, based on data available from five counties;
- A significant number of recipients who are sanctioned do not return to the general relief program when the sanction period expires. For these cases, we could not determine whether the recipients did not return to the program because they had been sanctioned or if the recipients failed to comply because they were no longer interested in or eligible for general relief benefits and, therefore, did not return to the program; and
- The duration of sanctions in the six counties we visited varied, ranging from 14 to 180 days.

Background

Section 17000 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requires each county in California to provide assistance to all indigent residents who are not supported by their friends or relatives or by state or private institutions. The counties' general relief programs provide this support in the form of cash payments or in-kind benefits, such as food, shelter, and direct payments to vendors who provide assistance to recipients. Each county is responsible for adopting specific standards for its general relief program, including standards for eligibility and program requirements, grant amounts, and program policies and procedures. The counties may also develop procedures to sanction recipients who do not comply with county requirements, thereby making the recipients ineligible for general relief benefits for a specified period.

Additionally, the counties may require recipients who are able to work to participate in a work program as a condition of eligibility. For example, the counties may require those recipients who are able to work to participate in training programs that teach work skills or skills for finding employment. The counties may also require that recipients contact a minimum number of potential employers within a specified period to meet job search requirements or may require that they participate in a work project for a specified period. Work project assignments may include activities such as removing litter from public beaches or parks or assisting at nonprofit organizations like the Salvation Army.

General relief programs are funded entirely by the counties. For fiscal year 1990-91, the counties reported that an average of 108,740 cases received general relief benefits each month. They reported spending \$405.9 million in general relief benefits through June 30, 1991.

**Reasons for
Sanctions and
Recisions**

Alameda, Los Angeles, and Orange counties sanction recipients only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of their general relief programs. Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties sanction for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of their general relief programs. Even in the counties that sanction for other than work program requirements, noncompliance with work program requirements was among the most common reasons for sanctions, accounting for 45 percent of the sanctions in these counties. Other common reasons for sanctions in these counties included failure to provide monthly income reports or other information necessary to determine eligibility. Statewide, 34 counties reported that they sanction general relief recipients only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of their general relief programs, 17 counties reported that they sanction recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of their general relief programs, and 7 counties reported that they do not sanction general relief recipients. Additionally, our review

showed that counties rescinded sanctions when the recipients either showed good cause for not complying with regulations or corrected the issue of noncompliance.

**Number of
Sanctions,
Recisions,
and Appeal
Hearings**

In setting county policy, each county defines the population of general relief recipients subject to sanction. In the four counties for which we could determine the number of cases subject to sanction during the review period, July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the counties imposed sanctions on a monthly average ranging from 11 percent of the total cases subject to sanction in one county to 63 percent in another. In the five counties for which we could determine the number of sanctions the counties subsequently rescinded, the counties rescinded a range of 12 percent of the sanctions imposed in one county to 36 percent in another. Further, in three counties, we could determine that, when an appeal hearing was held, the counties overturned a range of 41 percent of the sanctions in one county to 66 percent in another. The report presents the specific numbers of sanctions, recisions, and granted appeals for each county for which the data was available.

We also noted that a significant number of recipients who were sanctioned did not immediately return to the general relief program when the sanction period expired. In four counties, of the 127 sanctions we reviewed that were not rescinded or overturned, in 81 (64 percent) of the instances, there was no evidence in the case file that the recipient contacted the county to explain the reason for the noncompliance or to reapply for general relief benefits after the sanction period expired. For these cases, we could not determine whether the recipients did not return to the program because they had been sanctioned or whether they failed to comply because they were no longer interested in or eligible for general relief benefits and, therefore, were sanctioned.

Duration of Sanctions

The duration of sanctions varied significantly among the counties. In the six counties we visited, the shortest sanction period was 14 days and the longest was 180 days. Statewide, the counties reported sanctions ranging from 14 days to 730 days. Only one county reported a 730-day sanction, two counties reported a 365-day sanction, and six counties reported 180 days as their longest sanction. Two counties reported that they could permanently ban a recipient from their general relief programs after repeated instances of noncompliance.

Agency Comments

We received written responses from each of the six counties included in our review. The counties concur with the findings presented in our report.

Introduction

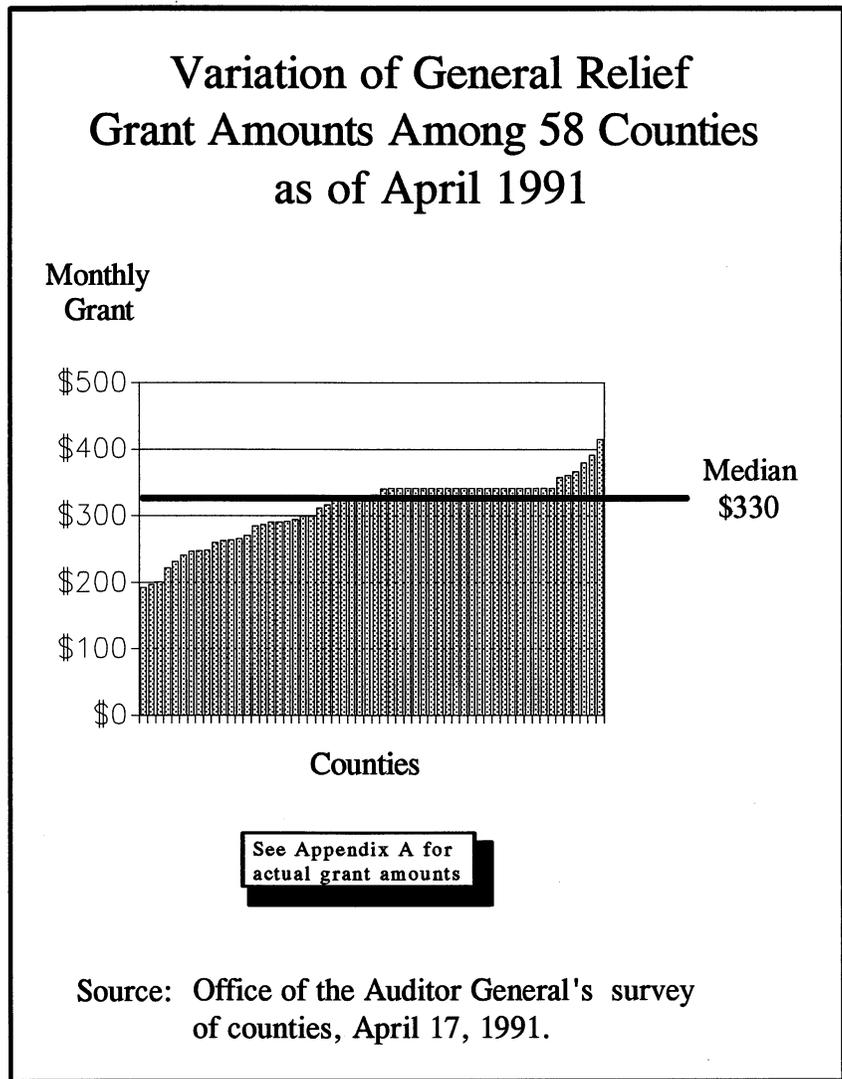
Section 17000 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requires each county in California to provide assistance to all indigent residents who are not supported by their friends or relatives or by state or private institutions. The General Relief/General Assistance (general relief) programs of the counties provide this support in the form of cash payments or in-kind benefits, such as food, shelter, and direct payments to vendors who provide assistance to recipients. Each county is responsible for adopting specific standards for its general relief program, including standards for eligibility and program requirements, grant amounts, and program policies and procedures. Counties may also establish policies to sanction recipients who do not comply with the counties' program requirements, thereby making the recipient ineligible for general relief for a specified period. The State Department of Social Services does not oversee or control the counties' administration of their general relief programs. Further, the general relief programs are funded entirely by the counties.

Program Operation

The specific policies of the general relief programs vary significantly among the 58 counties in California. The Welfare and Institutions Code provides that applicants must be residents of the county in which they are applying for general relief benefits, but most other eligibility requirements are set by each of the counties. For example, each county establishes its own policy regarding a maximum income level and the amount of property a person may own while receiving general relief benefits. In Alameda County, for example, a recipient may not own personal property in excess of \$1,000, excluding his or her home,

car, and other selected items. In Sacramento County, a recipient's personal property is limited to \$250, excluding his or her home, car, \$10 in liquid resources, and other selected items. Similarly, in Orange County, the limit on the value of a home a recipient may own is \$5,000. In contrast, Alameda and Santa Clara counties do not place a limit on the value of a home owned by a recipient. Monthly grants also vary among the counties. For example, the maximum monthly grant for an individual varies from \$192 in Yuba County to \$415 in Inyo County. The median grant among the 58 counties was \$330 for an individual as of April 1991. Figure 1 illustrates the variation in the grant amounts paid by the 58 counties as of April 1991. (Appendix A shows the maximum monthly grant amount for an individual in each county as of April 1991.)

Figure 1



Although specific program requirements vary among the counties, all 58 counties have established work programs for recipients of general relief who are able to work but unable to find employment. The Welfare and Institutions Code provides that counties may require general relief recipients who are not incapacitated to participate in work programs as a condition of eligibility. For example, the counties may require that the recipients participate in training programs that provide work skills or skills for finding employment. The counties may also

require that recipients contact a minimum number of potential employers within a specified period to meet job search requirements or may require them to participate in a work project for a specified period. Generally, to meet the work project requirement, recipients are assigned to local government agencies or nonprofit organizations to perform tasks that serve the public interest. Work projects can include a variety of activities, such as removing litter from public beaches or parks or assisting at an organization like the Salvation Army. The Welfare and Institutions Code provides that the purpose of such work projects shall be to assist in the recipient's rehabilitation and to preserve the recipient's self-respect. Other goals of the work programs are to assist recipients in developing appropriate habits, skills, and attitudes for working, to make them more employable, and to assist them in obtaining unsubsidized employment.

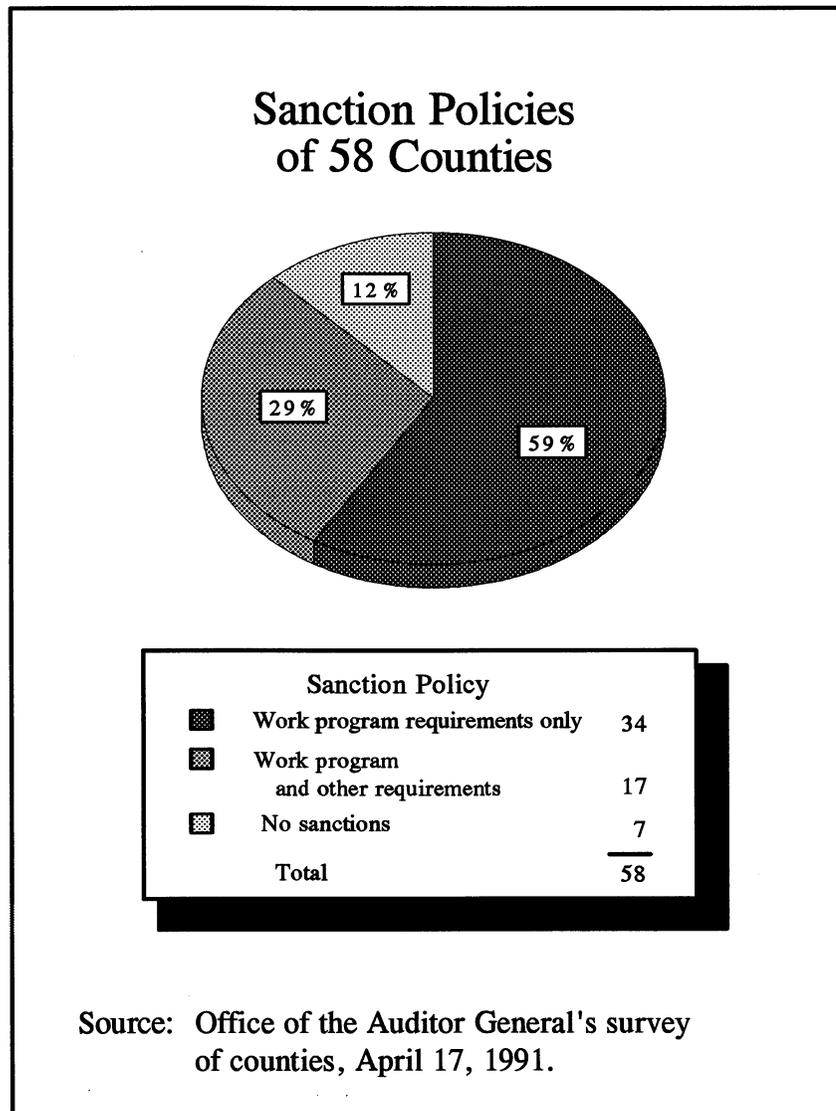
The specific work program requirements vary among the counties. For example, Los Angeles County requires general relief recipients who are able to work but unemployed to contact 24 potential employers during an eight-week period at the time of application and at the annual recertification to meet the county's job search requirements. Additionally, the county requires these employable recipients to work at a county work project a certain number of days each month, depending on the amount of the grant. In Alameda County, recipients are required to be available for and seeking employment each day they are not participating in other activities required by the county's general relief program. In this county also, the number of days recipients are required to work at a work project site depends on the amount of the grant they received. In these two counties and a number of others, the amount of time recipients are required to work at a work project is determined by dividing the amount of aid the recipients received by the state minimum hourly wage.

**Use of
Sanctions**

If a recipient does not comply with the requirements of a county's general relief program, the county may sanction the recipient, thereby making the recipient ineligible for general relief benefits for a specified time. Fifty-one counties reported that they impose durational sanctions on general relief recipients who do not

comply with program requirements. Of these 51 counties, 34 counties reported that they sanction general relief recipients only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of their general relief programs. Seventeen counties reported that they sanction recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of their general relief programs. Seven counties reported that they do not sanction general relief recipients. Figure 2 illustrates this breakdown. (Appendix B specifies which counties sanction general relief recipients for noncompliance with program requirements.)

Figure 2



Counties may also rescind or waive sanctions they have imposed. If recipients have been sanctioned but can show that there was a good reason for failing to meet the county's requirements or that the failure was beyond their control or, in some cases, if they correct the noncompliance, the county can reinstate the recipients. The county may do this by rescinding the sanctions or, in some counties, by allowing the recipients to reapply for general relief without waiting to the end of the sanction period. A county may rescind a sanction for the entire sanction period or for part of the sanction period only. Each of the six counties we visited had a procedure to rescind or waive sanctions. Additionally, in each of the six counties we visited, a recipient who has been sanctioned can request an administrative hearing to appeal the sanction.

Each county establishes its own policy regarding the length of sanctions. In a survey of the 58 counties, we found that the duration of sanctions ranges significantly among counties. For example, the sanction for a first instance of noncompliance ranges from a warning in Yolo and Yuba counties to a 180-day sanction in Mono, San Benito, and Sierra counties. Thirty counties impose increasing penalties for subsequent violations. For example, 13 counties reported that they impose a 30-day sanction for the first violation, 60 days for the second violation, and 90 days for the third violation within a specified time. Mono County reported a 730-day sanction for a third violation. Sierra County reported a 365-day sanction as its longest sanction, and six counties reported 180 days as their longest sanctions. Alpine and Fresno counties reported that they may permanently ban a recipient from their general relief programs after repeated instances of noncompliance. (Appendix C shows the duration of sanctions reported to us by the 51 counties that impose sanctions.)

**Program
Costs and
Participation**

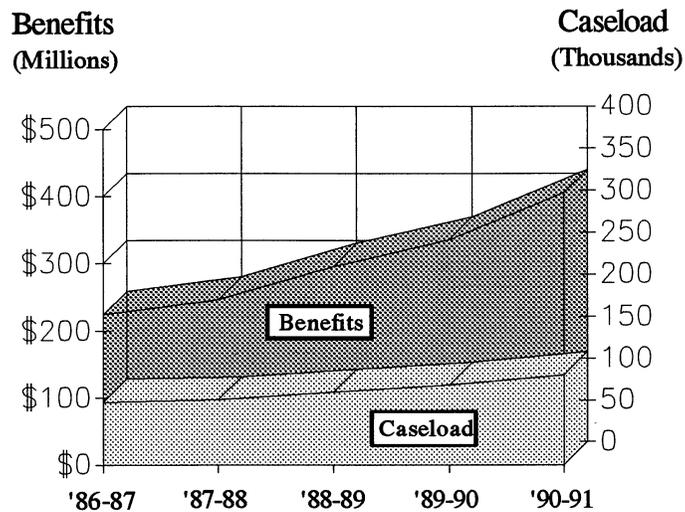
Statewide, the cost of general relief has increased. During the last five fiscal years, the cost of benefits provided through the counties' general relief programs has increased 80 percent from \$225.5 million in fiscal year 1986-87 to \$405.9 million in fiscal year 1990-91.¹ (Appendix D shows the cost trends in benefits paid by the 58 counties from fiscal years 1986-87 through 1990-91.) The general relief programs are funded entirely by the counties.

The general relief caseload has also increased during the last five fiscal years. Statewide, the average number of general relief cases receiving benefits each month increased 44 percent from 75,346 in fiscal year 1986-87 to 108,740 in fiscal year 1990-91. (Appendix E shows the statewide program growth in the number of cases during the last five fiscal years for each county.) Figure 3 shows statewide program growth in terms of benefits paid and caseload during the last five fiscal years.

¹The expenditure total for fiscal year 1990-91 does not include June expenditures for two counties.

Figure 3

**Total Benefits Paid and
Average Monthly Caseload
for Statewide General Relief
Fiscal Years 1986-87 through 1990-91**



**Caseload and Benefits
by Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Caseload	Benefits
1986-87	75,346	\$225,534,976
1987-88	77,560	\$246,398,173
1988-89	86,637	\$296,495,040
1989-90	94,657	\$336,057,034
1990-91	108,740	\$405,882,639

Source: Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau, and Los Angeles County, Department of Public Social Services.

During the same five-year period, in the six counties we visited, the benefits paid for general relief increased 83 percent from a combined total of \$179.2 million to \$327.2 million. During the same period, the number of general relief cases receiving benefits in these six counties increased 47 percent from a combined monthly average of 57,959 to 85,221 cases. Also, during the 18-month period we reviewed, July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the number of cases for employable recipients on general relief in five of the six counties increased 53 percent from a combined monthly total of 19,868 cases to 30,452 cases. Employable recipients are those general relief recipients the counties have determined are able to work. Each county establishes its own definition of employable recipients, but generally, recipients are determined to be employable unless they provide medical evidence to the contrary. Table 1 shows the increase in the general relief caseload overall and in the employable population during the 18 months we reviewed.

Table 1 Total Caseload and Employable Caseload in the General Relief Programs of Six Counties July 1, 1989 Through December 31, 1990

County	July 1989 Total Caseload	December 1990 Total Caseload	Percentage Increase	July 1989 Employable Caseload	December 1990 Employable Caseload	Percentage Increase
Alameda	6,695	9,233	38%	^a		
Los Angeles	45,563	54,179	19	14,034 ^b	22,679 ^b	62%
Orange	2,604	3,346	28	908	1,413	56
Sacramento	4,369	4,573	5	1,270	1,365	7
San Francisco	8,657	10,997	27	2,248	2,984	33
Santa Clara	1,983	2,781	40	1,408 ^b	2,011 ^b	43

Sources: State Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau, for data on total caseload, and the individual counties for data on employable caseload.

^a Alameda County could not provide data in a usable format to determine the number of cases for its employable recipients.

^b These figures are estimates of the Office of the Auditor General based on figures the counties provided on the number of employable recipients.

**Scope and
Methodology**

The purpose of our audit was to review the use of sanctions in the general relief programs in six counties: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Clara. We selected these counties because they are among the counties with large participation levels in their general relief programs. We also wanted to provide a sample consisting of counties that sanction general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program requirements only and those that sanction for noncompliance with work program and other program requirements. The six counties we selected represented approximately 78 percent of the State's general relief caseload as of June 30, 1991.

We were specifically requested to determine the reasons for sanctions imposed in each of the six counties, the number of sanctions, and the duration of sanctions. At each county, we interviewed program officials and reviewed pertinent policy, procedural, and regulatory documents to understand the operations of the county's general relief program. Additionally, we reviewed the county's procedures for maintaining manual and automated data related to the general relief program. We also reviewed county documents reporting general relief expenditures and caseload.

We determined that in five of the six counties, the county's automated information system was a reliable source of data regarding sanctions. In these counties, we obtained information from the automated systems to determine the reasons for the sanctions the counties imposed during the 18-month period, July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the number of these sanctions, and their duration. We then selected a random sample of sanctions identified by the automated systems in each county. For each sanction in our sample, we reviewed the related case file to confirm that the information reported by the automated system did represent a durational sanction. We tested a sufficient number of cases in each county to assure ourselves that we could rely on the data provided by the automated information systems. (For a further discussion of the results of our testing in each county, see appendices F through K.) In addition, whenever the county had available data, we conducted a similar test to determine the number of sanctions the county rescinded during the same 18-month period. Further, in four of the six counties, while

conducting our case file review, we attempted to determine whether recipients returned to the county's general relief program after being sanctioned. We used the services of a statistical consultant to assist us in developing projections from certain sample data.

Sacramento County could not provide data regarding the number of sanctions imposed or identify cases in which the recipient had been sanctioned. Therefore, in this county, we relied on the county's automated information system to identify all cases that had received general relief benefits during our 18-month review period. We then selected a random sample of these cases and reviewed them to determine whether the recipient had been sanctioned during the review period. When we determined that a sanction had occurred, we reviewed the case file data pertinent to the sanction. From the results of our case file review, we estimated the number of sanctions the county imposed during the review period, the number of sanctions rescinded, the reasons for the sanctions, and the duration of the sanctions.

In three counties, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara, we were also able to obtain data regarding administrative hearings in which recipients appealed sanctions. In the other three counties, we could not obtain information that was segregated in a manner that allowed us to identify those hearings that related to sanctions in the general relief program.

Further, we conducted a survey of the remaining 52 counties to obtain information about their general relief programs. Specifically, we obtained information about the counties' sanction policies, the duration of sanctions, expenditures, caseload, and grant amounts.

Finally, we reviewed state law related to counties' general relief programs, previous studies of the statewide general relief programs, and reports that the counties submitted to the State regarding their expenditures and caseload in their general relief programs. We did not audit the data contained in these reports.

**Chapter Analysis of the Use of Sanctions in the
General Relief/General Assistance Programs
of Six Counties**

**Chapter
Summary** We conducted a review of sanctions within the General Relief/
General Assistance (general relief) programs of six
counties: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento,
San Francisco, and Santa Clara. We reviewed the reasons
recipients were sanctioned from the program, the number of
sanctions imposed, and the duration of the sanctions. We found
that the counties' policies for sanctioning general relief recipients
vary significantly. Three of these counties sanction recipients
only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of
their general relief programs; the other three counties sanction
recipients for noncompliance with work program and other
requirements of their general relief programs. Even in the
counties that sanction for other than work program requirements,
noncompliance with work program requirements made up a
significant number of the sanctions, accounting for 45 percent of
the sanctions imposed in these counties.

Our review also showed that the monthly average of the
number of recipients sanctioned by the counties ranged from
11 percent of the total population subject to sanction in one
county to 63 percent in another county, based on data available
from four counties. Additionally, our review showed that the
counties rescinded a significant number of sanctions when the
recipients either corrected the issue of noncompliance or provided
good cause for not complying with the counties' regulations.
During our review period, the counties rescinded a range of
12 percent of the total number of sanctions imposed in one
county to 36 percent in another county, based on data available
from five counties. In addition, in three counties, we were able to

determine that the counties overturned a range of 41 to 66 percent of the sanctions when a hearing was held to appeal the sanction. Our review further revealed that a significant number of recipients who were sanctioned did not immediately return to the general relief program when the sanction period expired. Finally, we found that the duration of sanction periods in these six counties also varied, ranging from 14 to 180 days.

**Reasons for
Sanctions and
Revisions**

Alameda, Los Angeles, and Orange counties sanction recipients only for noncompliance with the work program requirements of their general relief programs. Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties sanction for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of their general relief programs. A county that sanctions general relief recipients for work program requirements may, for example, sanction a recipient for not showing up to a county work project assignment or for not attending a county training program to provide job search skills. A county that also sanctions recipients for other than work program requirements may, in addition, sanction for issues such as clients not submitting a monthly report of income.² In appendices F through K we present each of the six counties' policies regarding sanctions, including the reasons for which the counties may sanction a general relief recipient.

Five of the six counties we visited were able to provide reliable summary information from their automated information systems on the causes of sanctions actually imposed during the 18-month period we reviewed. The sixth county, Sacramento County, could not provide summary information about the causes of sanctions during that period; however, we are able to estimate the most common causes based on the causes observed in our case file review of Sacramento County. Table 2 displays by county the most common causes of all sanctions imposed during the review period.

²See pages 3 to 4 of the Introduction for a more detailed description of work program and other requirements of the general relief programs.

Table 2

Reasons for All Sanctions Imposed
July 1, 1989 Through December 31, 1990

Reasons for Sanctions	Work Program Only			Work Program and Other Program Requirements				Subtotal	Total
	Alameda	Los Angeles	Orange	Subtotal	Sacramento ^a	San Francisco	Santa Clara		
WORK PROGRAM RELATED SANCTIONS									
Failure to comply with work program--nonspecific reason ^b	2,753	1,319	2,330	6,402	0	0	0	0	6,402
Failure to conduct job search and/or work project	0	85,729	0	85,729	0	2,949	261	3,210	88,939
Failure to comply with job search requirements	4,756	0	0	4,756	0	0	0	0	4,756
Failure to comply with or appear at work project	0	8,983	8,181	17,164	842	4,286	1,129	6,257	23,421
Failure to register with work program or attend orientation or assessment appointment	0	0	3,623	3,623	5,687	2,786	0	8,473	12,096
Failure to submit medical evaluation form for deferral from work program	0	0	0	0	2,317	0	0	2,317	2,317
Other work program related sanctions	33	2,035	563	2,631	0	0	12	12	2,643
Subtotal	7,542	98,066	14,697	120,305	8,846	10,021	1,402	20,269	140,574
SANCTIONS RELATED TO PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS OTHER THAN WORK PROGRAM									
Failure to submit income report for eligibility determination	0	0	0	0	0	0	996	996	996
Incomplete income report for eligibility determination	0	0	0	0	0	0	261	261	261
Client's income or Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment exceeds general relief grant	0	0	0	0	0	3,839	0	3,839	3,839
Failure to keep eligibility appointment or provide essential information	0	0	0	0	1,054	7,670	292	9,016	9,016
Failure to substantiate residence after cash grant	0	0	0	0	0	5,534	0	5,534	5,534
Other sanctions related to program requirements other than work program	0	0	0	0	211	5,125	105	5,441	5,441
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	1,265	22,168	1,654	25,087	25,087
Total	7,542	98,066	14,697	120,305	10,111	32,189	3,056	45,356	165,661

Source: Counties' automated information systems.

^aThe Sacramento County figures are projections based on our case file review.

^bEach of the six counties uses codes to record sanction information on its automated system. Frequently, the code indicating the reason for sanction was no more specific than "failure to comply with work program."

As Table 2 shows, even in those counties that sanction recipients for other than work program requirements, noncompliance with work program requirements accounted for 45 percent of the sanctions imposed in those counties. The most frequent specifically identifiable reasons for sanctions in the six counties were failure to conduct an adequate job search and failure to comply with or attend a work project assignment. Our review of case files in each county confirmed the above findings. In addition, in cases in which the sanction code was not specific and we could determine the specific reason for the sanction from the case file, most often, the actual reason was that the recipients had not registered with the county's work project or they had not arrived for a work project assignment.

For example, one of the categories with a large number of sanctions was "Failure to comply with job search requirements." We found that this category included a number of more specific reasons such as the recipients failing to provide evidence that they conducted the required number of job searches during the period or failing to show up for job search training.

Rescissions of Sanctions

From our case file review, we were able to determine more specific reasons for the sanctions we reviewed. In addition, we were able to determine which sanctions were rescinded. The case files showed that counties rescinded sanctions when the recipients provided good cause for not complying with program requirements or when they came into compliance with regulations. In one case, a recipient was sanctioned for not attending a work program meeting. The recipient reported that she had not attended the meeting because she was attending a court-ordered parenting class instead. The county rescinded the sanction. In another case, a recipient was sanctioned because he had not reported to a work project site. The county rescinded the sanction because the recipient notified the county that he did not report to the work site because he had been at a medical appointment at that time. In a third case, the recipient was sanctioned for failure to comply with job search requirements. The sanction was subsequently rescinded when the recipient provided evidence that he had complied with the requirements.

Table 3 presents a more detailed categorization of the reasons for the sanctions we reviewed as part of our case file review. The table also shows the sanctions in each category that were rescinded because the recipients subsequently came into compliance or established good cause for their noncompliance.

Table 3 Reasons for Sanctions Imposed in Cases Reviewed by the Office of the Auditor General

Reason for Sanction	Number of Sanctions	Number of Recisions	Percentage Rescinded	Number of Sanctions Remaining
Failed to register with work program	17	0	0%	17
Failed to attend work assignment	31	7	23	24
Failed to comply with work project assignment	39	16	41	23
Failed to conduct job search	58	8	14	50
Quit job without good cause	7	0	0	7
Failed to attend General Relief evaluation session	5	3	60	2
Failed to provide essential information	12	6	50	6
Failed to keep appointment	77	17	22	60
Client's income or Supplemental Security Income exceeds General Relief grant	3	0	0	3
Missing or incomplete income report	17	9	53	8
Failed to report unemployment benefits or actual income	2	0	0	2
Failed to apply for Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment or sign form for State Supplemental Payment	3	2	67	1
Failed to obtain photo ID from Department of Motor Vehicles	1	0	0	1
Failed to submit medical evaluation form or release of information form or CA-5 Veteran's Referral form	12	5	42	7
Client requested removal from General Relief program	2	0	0	2
Client died	1	0	0	1
Client was in jail	1	0	0	1
Lost contact with client, no known whereabouts	2	1	50	1
Client's residence is unsubstantiated	6	1	17	5
Total	296	75	25%	221

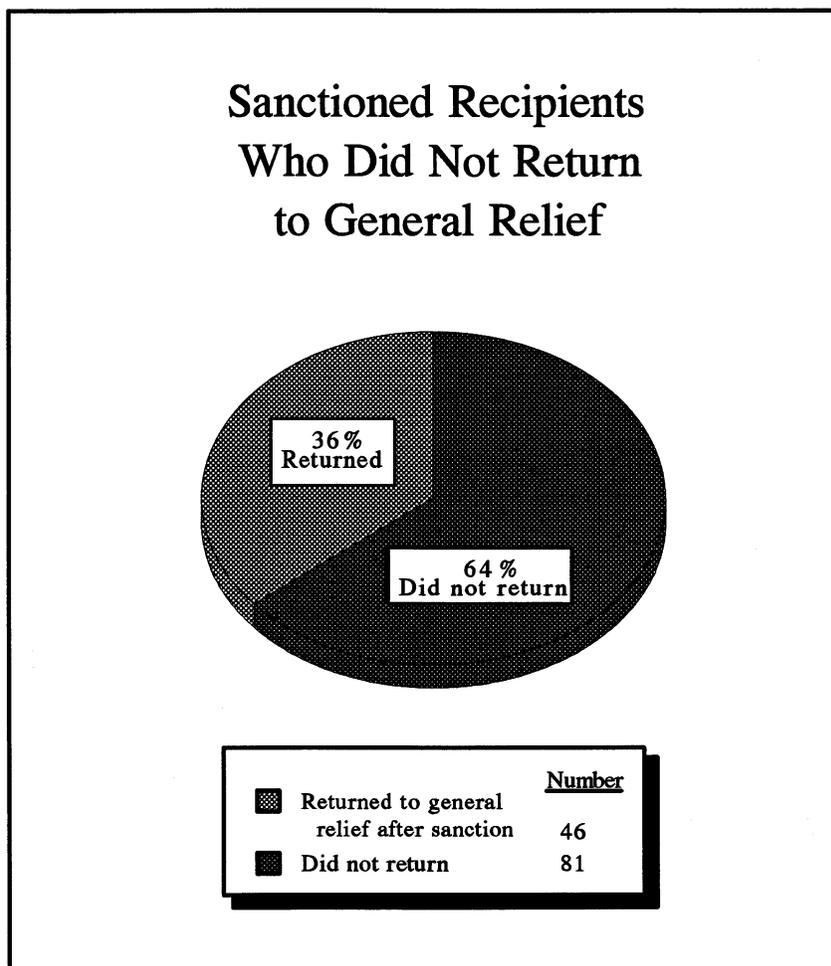
Some Sanctioned Recipients May Leave Programs Voluntarily

Our case file review also revealed that a number of those recipients sanctioned for failure to keep appointments or otherwise comply with program requirements did not return to the general relief program after the sanction was imposed. In these cases, we could not determine whether the recipients did not return to the program because they had been sanctioned or whether the recipients failed to comply because they were no longer interested in or eligible for the general relief benefits. For example, in one case we reviewed, the recipient was sanctioned because he failed to attend a work project meeting. He subsequently notified the county that he did not attend the meeting because he was at a part-time job he had recently obtained. If the recipient had not notified the county that he had obtained a job and was, therefore, no longer eligible for general assistance, the case file would simply have shown that the county had sanctioned the recipient and had received no further contact from him.

In a similar case, a recipient received general relief benefits from June 1989 through October 1989. In October, the recipient was sanctioned for the month of November because he failed to attend a work project meeting. However, according to the case file, by the end of our review in May 1991, 19 months after the sanction was imposed, the county had received no contact from the recipient to explain why he had not attended the work project meeting or reapplied for general relief benefits. Consequently, we could not determine whether the sanction discouraged the recipient from continued participation in the general relief program or whether the recipient quit participating because he had found employment, had moved, or had otherwise become ineligible for the program. In another case, a recipient was sanctioned in July 1989 because he had not submitted a medical evaluation form for deferral from the work program requirements. Through May 1991, 22 months after the sanction, the case file indicated no further contact from the recipient to contest the sanction or to reapply for assistance. However, shortly after the county mailed the recipient the letter notifying him of the sanction, the letter was returned marked "No longer resides here." In this case, it was questionable whether the recipient knew he had been sanctioned from the general relief program.

In four counties, we reviewed 196 sanctions and the case files for these sanctions to determine whether the recipient returned to the general assistance program after the sanction period expired. Of the 196 sanctions reviewed, 69 were rescinded. Of the 127 sanctions remaining, in 81 (64 percent) of the instances there was no evidence in the case file that the recipients had returned to the general relief program or had contacted the county to explain the reason for the noncompliance that caused the sanction. For these 81 sanctions, we could not determine whether the recipients had not returned to the program because of the sanction or whether the recipients had failed to comply with the program for some other reason, such as finding employment or moving, and, therefore, were sanctioned. In 41 instances in which recipients did return and we determined the date of return, they did so either immediately after the sanction period expired or within 12 months of that time. Figure 4 shows the proportion of sanctioned recipients who did not return to the general relief programs.

Figure 4



**Number of
Sanctions,
Recisions,
and Appeal
Hearings**

For each county in our review we attempted to determine the number of sanctions and recisions and to determine the outcome of hearings to appeal the sanctions during the period we reviewed. As stated earlier, in five of the six counties, our audit tests showed that we could rely on data provided from the counties' automated information systems regarding sanctions. Since Sacramento County could not provide such summary information, in that county we reviewed a sufficient number of case files to allow us to project the number of sanctions the county imposed during the 18-month period we reviewed.

Additionally, Alameda and San Francisco counties provided summary information from their automated systems on the number of sanctions they rescinded from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990. In Orange, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties, we were able to project the number of rescisions based on the results of our file review. We could not, however, provide rescision data for Los Angeles County because, in that county, rather than rescind the sanction when a recipient can establish a good reason why a sanction should not have been imposed, the county waives the sanction and allows the recipient to immediately reapply for general relief.

Finally, in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties we were able to determine from county records the number of sanctions overturned as a result of appeal hearings during our review period. In appendices G, I, and K of this report we present more detailed information about appeal hearings in these counties. That analysis shows that in at least two counties, Sacramento and Los Angeles, only a percentage of hearings scheduled actually took place, usually because the recipient did not appear for the hearing. Table 4 presents for each county the number of sanctions, the number of rescisions, and the number of hearings in which sanctions were overturned.

Table 4 Number of Sanctions, Recisions, and Sanctions Reversed
July 1, 1989 Through December 31, 1990

County	Total Number of Sanctions	Total Number of Recisions	Percentage of Sanctions Rescinded	Total Number of Sanctions Reversed Through Hearings	Sanctions Remaining
Alameda	7,542	2,690	36%	NA ^a	4,852 ^b
Los Angeles	98,066	NA		1,777	96,289 ^c
Orange	14,697	1,837 ^d	12	NA	12,860 ^b
Sacramento	10,111 ^d	2,527 ^d	25	38	7,546
San Francisco	32,189	7,856	24	NA	24,333 ^b
Santa Clara	3,056	1,062	35	25 ^e	1,969 ^b

^a "NA" indicates that the data was not available.

^bThis number could have been less if we had been able to determine the total number of sanctions that were reversed through the hearing process during our 18-month review period.

^cThis number could have been less if we had been able to determine the number of sanctions that were waived.

^dThese figures are projected numbers based on the case file review by the Office of the Auditor General.

^eThis number reflects 15 months of data during the 18-month review period.

It would be misleading to attempt direct comparisons between the counties of the data presented above. There are a variety of reasons for the range in the total number of sanctions issued by the counties. Specifically, the counties have different program requirements, each county defines its own population of recipients subject to sanction, the caseloads of the counties vary, and the duration of sanctions varies among the counties. For example, in Los Angeles County, during the 18-month review period, we estimate that a monthly average of 18,319 cases were subject to sanction; in Santa Clara County, a monthly average of 1,612 cases were subject to sanction. Another possible reason for the range of sanctions is the difference in the duration of the sanctions. The sanctions of the City and County of San Francisco are always 14 days long. In contrast, in the other five counties, sanctions range from 30 to 180 days. Consequently, a recipient in San Francisco could be sanctioned more than once during the

time a recipient in another county would still be under one sanction. Further, in San Francisco, every continuing case that is closed is considered “sanctioned”. For example, if recipients request to voluntarily withdraw from the general relief program, San Francisco records these cases as “sanctioned”, although the recipients would be allowed to immediately reapply if they chose to do so. In the other counties, sanctions are imposed only for noncompliance issues, not when cases are closed for other reasons.

Number of Sanctions as a Percentage of Caseload Subject to Sanction

We also analyzed the number of sanctions imposed during our review period as a percentage of caseload subject to sanction in each county. Table 5 shows the average number of monthly sanctions imposed in five of the six counties and, when available, the relative population of recipients subject to sanction from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990. Alameda County sanctions only employable recipients, but the county could not provide in a usable format the number of recipients classified as employable during our review period. Also, Sacramento County could not provide the number of sanctions imposed during each of the 18 months we reviewed. Therefore, in Table 5, we could not develop the number of sanctions as a percentage of caseload subject to sanction for Alameda and Sacramento counties.

Table 5 **Number of Sanctions as a Percentage of Caseload Subject to Sanction July 1, 1989 Through December 31, 1990**

County	Average Monthly Caseload Subject to Sanction	Average Number of Sanctions Monthly	Percentage of Caseload Sanctioned
Alameda	NA ^a	419	NA
Los Angeles	18,319 ^b	5,448	30% ^c
Orange	1,300	817	63 ^c
Sacramento	4,402	NA	NA
San Francisco	10,021	1,788	18
Santa Clara	1,612 ^b	170	11 ^c

^a "NA" indicates that the data was not available.

^bThis number is an estimate by the Office of the Auditor General of employable cases based on data the county provided about the number of employable recipients.

^cOnly employable clients are subject to sanctions.

As Table 5 shows, during our review period, on a monthly average the four counties sanctioned a range of 11 to 63 percent of the total cases subject to sanction. We also noted that in three of the four counties the number of sanctions imposed during our review period remained relatively constant as a percentage of caseload subject to sanction. In appendices F through K, we present a trend analysis of sanctions as a percentage of caseload during the review period.

Duration of Sanctions

The duration of the sanctions varied among the counties. In the six counties we visited, the shortest sanction period was in San Francisco City and County where the sanction period is always 14 days. The longest sanction period among these six counties was in Orange County where the sanction period is 90 days for the first offense and 180 days for a subsequent offense within 12 months. Table 6 presents the policies on duration of sanction periods for each of the six counties.

Table 6 County Policy Regarding Duration of Sanctions (by Days)

County	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense
Alameda	30	30	60 ^a
Los Angeles	60		
Orange	90	180 ^a	
Sacramento	30 ^b		
San Francisco	14		
Santa Clara	30	90 ^c	

^aThis figure represents the duration of the sanction if this offense occurs within 12 months of the first offense.

^bThis figure would be 90 days if fraud was determined by a county investigator or 180 days or a period determined by the court if fraud was determined by a court of law.

^cThis figure represents the duration of the sanction if this offense occurs within 24 months of the first offense.

In conducting our case file review, we found that in 293 of 296 sanctions we reviewed, the sanction was initiated for a period consistent with the policy of the respective county. For 3 sanctions, we could not determine the sanction period imposed. Table 7 presents, for July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the number of sanctions imposed by each county by duration of sanction. Unless noted otherwise, the source of the data is each county's automated information system.

Table 7 Duration of Sanctions Imposed July 1, 1989 Through December 31, 1990

County	14 Days	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	180 Days
Alameda		7,538	4		
Los Angeles			98,066		
Orange				13,722	975
Sacramento		10,111 ^a	a	a	
San Francisco	32,189				
Santa Clara		2,731 ^b		325 ^b	

^aThis number is a projection based on the results of our case file review. Based on our review, the number of 90-day and 180-day sanctions are unknown but expected to be rare.

^bThis number is a projection based on the results of our case file review.

We conducted this review under the authority vested in the auditor general by Section 10500 et seq. of the California Government Code and according to generally accepted governmental auditing standards. We limited our review to those areas specified in the audit scope section of this report.

Respectfully submitted,


KURT R. SJOBERG
Auditor General (acting)

Date: August 19, 1991

Staff: Robert E. Christophel, Audit Manager
Melanie M. Kee
Arn Gittleman
Gilberto Guadiana
Star Castro
Glen G. Fowler

Appendix A Maximum Monthly Grants in 58 Counties

County	Maximum Monthly Grant For an Individual
Alameda	340
Alpine	326
Amador	266
Butte	326
Calaveras	326
Colusa	341
Contra Costa	332
Del Norte	299
El Dorado	341
Fresno	341
Glenn	341
Humboldt	391
Imperial	341
Inyo	415
Kern	341
Kings	366
Lake	341
Lassen	264
Los Angeles	312
Madera	341
Marin	341
Mariposa	285
Mendocino	341
Merced	263
Modoc	295
Mono	271
Monterey	341
Napa	380
Nevada	341
Orange	341
Placer	248
Plumas	323
Riverside	292
Sacramento	317
San Benito	249 + utilities
San Bernardino	222
San Diego	291
San Francisco	341
San Joaquin	241
San Luis Obispo	360
San Mateo	341
Santa Barbara	358
Santa Clara	341
Santa Cruz	341
Shasta	291
Sierra	201
Siskiyou	260
Solano	341
Sonoma	342
Stanislaus	328
Sutter	197
Tehama	341
Trinity	299
Tulare	232
Tuolumne	287
Ventura	341
Yolo	247
Yuba	192
Median	330

Source: Office of the Auditor General's survey of counties, April 17, 1991.

Appendix B Counties Sanctioning General Relief Recipients for Noncompliance With Program Requirements

Counties That Do Not Sanction	Counties That Sanction Only for Noncompliance With Work Program Requirements	Counties That Sanction for Noncompliance With Work Program and Other Requirements
Imperial	Alameda	Alpine
Inyo	Butte	Amador
Marin	Calaveras	Contra Costa
Mariposa	Colusa	Glenn
Monterey	Del Norte	Humboldt
Plumas	El Dorado	Madera
Tulare	Fresno	Mendocino
	Kern	Merced
	Kings	Modoc
	Lake	Mono
	Lassen	Riverside
	Los Angeles	Sacramento
	Napa	San Francisco
	Nevada	Santa Clara ^a
	Orange	Santa Cruz
	Placer	Siskiyou
	San Benito	Sonoma
	San Bernardino	
	San Diego	
	San Joaquin	
	San Luis Obispo	
	San Mateo	
	Santa Barbara	
	Shasta	
	Sierra	
	Solano	
	Stanislaus	
	Sutter	
	Tehama	
	Trinity	
	Tuolumne	
	Ventura	
	Yolo	
	Yuba	

Source: Office of the Auditor General's survey of counties, April 17, 1991.

^aSanta Clara sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements; however, sanctions are only applied against recipients classified as employable.

Appendix C Duration of Sanctions in Counties (by Days)

Counties That Sanction	First Infraction	Second Infraction	Third Infraction
Alameda	30	30	60
Alpine	30	60	Permanent
Amador	30	60	90
Butte	30	60	180
Calaveras	30	90	180
Colusa		30	
Contra Costa	30		
Del Norte	30	60	90
El Dorado	30	60	90
Fresno	90	180	Permanent
Glenn	30	60	180
Humboldt	30	60	120
Kern	30	60	
Kings	60		
Lake	30		
Lassen	30		
Los Angeles	60		
Madera	30		
Mendocino	30		
Merced	90 ^a		
Modoc	30	60	90
Mono	180	365	730
Napa	30	30	60 ^b
Nevada	30 at 50% benefits	30 at 25% benefits	
Orange	90	180	
Placer	30		
Riverside	30	60	90
Sacramento	30 ^c		
San Benito	180		
San Bernardino	30	60	90
San Diego	30 or 90 ^d		
San Francisco	14		
San Joaquin	30		
San Luis Obispo	30		
San Mateo	30	60	90
Santa Barbara	30	60	90
Santa Clara	30	90	
Santa Cruz	90		
Shasta	30	60	90
Sierra	180	365	
Siskiyou	30 at 50% benefits	30	
Solano	30	60	90
Sonoma	30		
Stanislaus	60	120	180
Sutter	30	60	90
Tehama	30	60	90
Trinity	30	60	90
Tuolumne	30 or 60 ^d		
Ventura	30		
Yolo	Warning	30	
Yuba	Warning, 14 or 30 ^d	14, 30, or 60 ^d	60

Source: Office of the Auditor General's survey of counties, April 17, 1991.

^aMerced also sanctions 365 days for fraud.

^bOn the third violation, Nevada County continues the sanction until the recipient comes into compliance.

^cSacramento also sanctions 90 days or 180 days for fraud.

^dDuration of sanction depends on type of infraction.

Appendix D General Relief Benefit Costs by County Fiscal Years 1986-87 through 1990-91

County	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Alameda	\$ 10,348,849	\$ 14,409,918	\$ 19,697,330	\$ 29,936,490	\$ 38,127,386
Alpine	0	591	2,886	10,722	6,905
Amador	73,008	95,740	68,441	36,778	28,398
Butte	1,474,777	1,522,123	1,979,188	2,970,577	3,016,389
Calaveras	9,803	21,982	143,082	214,332	164,394
Colusa	12,853	37,267	43,902	57,643	95,656
Contra Costa	7,130,952	8,708,698	10,200,170	12,963,104	15,652,138
Del Norte	5,232	13,223	8,219	17,957	36,567
El Dorado	643,594	605,192	546,011	510,547	542,407
Fresno	3,547,782	3,285,128	3,069,141	3,252,725	2,832,346
Glenn	90,027	71,460	96,901	163,889	129,883
Humboldt	773,432	622,934	1,305,364	1,751,872	1,854,754
Imperial	24,752	26,918	18,095	11,484	4,277 ^a
Inyo	38,152	37,464	36,198	63,762	73,944
Kern	1,201,331	782,540	983,192	1,263,073	1,473,723
Kings	123,905	128,404	69,816	72,168	107,125
Lake	81,999	103,360	98,489	103,326	71,760 ^a
Lassen	56,388	32,420	41,474	46,596	88,764
Los Angeles	119,534,916	131,511,255	163,418,480	176,624,327	206,618,495 ^b
Madera	6,274	7,381	2,814	9,305	24,894
Marin	1,013,133	1,263,408	1,768,137	1,408,303	1,467,158
Mariposa	3,815	7,938	19,422	29,325	33,207
Mendocino	198,012	270,571	320,080	687,919	1,015,133
Merced	631,364	743,591	779,698	708,686	628,461
Modoc	99,140	163,030	201,995	174,976	126,619
Mono	4,853	13,868	7,673	3,479	7,934
Monterey	425,927	636,314	858,093	1,108,918	1,509,550
Napa	55,923	152,185	188,555	293,477	283,256
Nevada	137,195	158,935	215,046	278,909	366,607
Orange	4,888,325	5,933,331	7,320,448	8,350,119	10,239,820
Placer	449,296	442,028	423,157	441,434	685,430
Plumas	8,483	18,261	22,017	12,935	23,211
Riverside	510,527	495,283	426,088	443,273	607,757
Sacramento	8,387,395	11,643,615	12,279,343	11,498,758	15,475,788
San Benito	1,972	584	1,733	2,271	2,074
San Bernardino	1,251,198	890,460	918,056	982,976	1,044,771
San Diego	11,232,417	13,521,195	18,481,903	19,165,881	25,861,414
San Francisco	28,192,545	25,392,551	28,384,734	36,300,178	45,904,583
San Joaquin	1,670,291	1,478,484	1,791,512	1,985,815	2,205,402
San Luis Obispo	282,941	259,035	189,022	235,713	316,576
San Mateo	3,972,868	3,735,680	4,063,288	3,790,709	3,525,237
Santa Barbara	752,689	1,392,324	976,423	898,700	1,551,837
Santa Clara	7,871,701	7,570,741	7,163,335	7,706,733	10,794,171
Santa Cruz	421,063	332,933	429,464	537,964	683,489
Shasta	447,188	413,757	614,168	656,717	735,505
Sierra	1,536	3,435	7,337	398	0
Siskiyou	368,865	333,871	284,815	291,394	331,403
Solano	3,075,055	2,891,515	2,579,821	3,498,516	4,047,371
Sonoma	525,597	620,809	603,517	566,158	686,235
Stanislaus	1,113,296	1,147,447	1,165,196	1,209,511	1,442,796
Sutter	76,438	65,168	89,473	59,761	68,212
Tehama	46,505	23,693	30,621	92,956	169,996
Trinity	3,393	5,452	9,404	22,164	59,685
Tulare	1,109,621	1,061,654	925,877	939,389	867,980
Tuolumne	2,102	5,072	3,185	13,595	20,299
Ventura	369,496	325,531	370,702	837,808	1,148,113
Yolo	712,028	900,832	693,163	692,190	950,029
Yuba	42,757	61,594	59,346	48,849	45,325
Total	\$225,534,976	\$246,398,173	\$296,495,040	\$336,057,034	\$405,882,639

Source: Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau.

Note: The Office of the Auditor General did not audit these data.

^aFigure does not include expenditures for June 1991.

^bFigure provided by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Social Services.

**Appendix E Average Monthly Number of Cases
That Received General Relief Benefits
Fiscal Years 1986-87 through 1990-91**

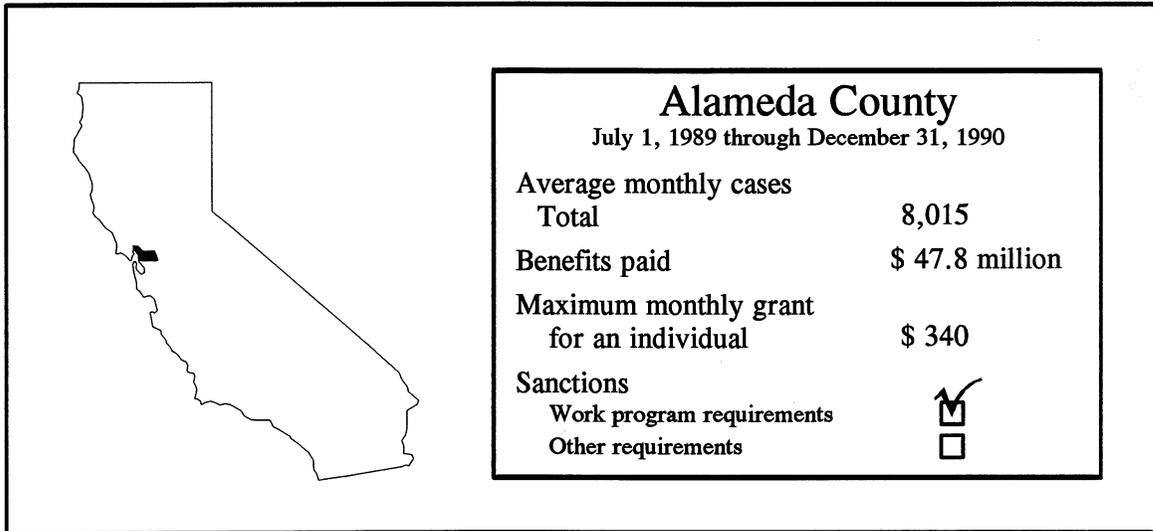
County	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Alameda	3,252	4,027	5,261	7,540	9,492
Alpine	0	1	1	5	2
Amador	30	39	35	22	15
Butte	596	573	680	937	920
Calaveras	5	9	36	62	42
Colusa	7	18	17	26	34
Contra Costa	2,360	2,615	2,994	3,510	4,393
Del Norte	7	12	7	13	23
El Dorado	236	246	245	212	219
Fresno	1,252	1,146	1,163	1,258	1,182
Glenn	33	26	34	52	40
Humboldt	343	275	328	416	439
Imperial	14	13	9	6	3
Inyo	23	22	20	33	37
Kern	403	308	352	451	539
Kings	54	50	24	17	22
Lake	22	46	42	34	27
Lassen	29	17	21	17	33
Los Angeles	38,371	38,466	44,507	47,154	53,804 ^a
Madera	5	5	4	8	10
Marin	408	464	573	519	455
Mariposa	2	3	8	13	13
Mendocino	123	153	129	219	308
Merced	350	334	309	275	247
Modoc	69	105	103	90	57
Mono	10	9	8	10	10
Monterey	163	221	274	343	387
Napa	18	33	59	85	51
Nevada	70	105	124	126	175
Orange	1,960	2,187	2,653	3,019	3,628
Placer	218	208	186	190	262
Plumas	7	10	13	7	13
Riverside	218	201	166	158	197
Sacramento	3,870	4,705	4,817	4,426	4,819
San Benito	1	1	2	2	1
San Bernardino	535	382	391	417	448
San Diego	4,090	4,847	5,761	5,573	6,764
San Francisco	8,007	8,009	7,876	9,503	10,546
San Joaquin	1,036	917	1,001	1,022	1,044
San Luis Obispo	122	100	84	98	132
San Mateo	1,123	1,052	1,104	1,057	978
Santa Barbara	315	455	353	340	476
Santa Clara	2,499	2,229	2,064	2,141	2,932
Santa Cruz	131	105	124	244	181
Shasta	218	195	280	304	310
Sierra	1	2	5	0	0
Siskiyou	168	130	120	107	111
Solano	823	733	618	799	856
Sonoma	280	293	268	271	334
Stanislaus	364	344	350	349	392
Sutter	42	37	48	35	35
Tehama	222	11	12	30	52
Trinity	2	3	5	7	18
Tulare	567	528	505	501	460
Tuolumne	1	2	2	4	5
Ventura	144	126	123	248	307
Yolo	301	365	304	327	435
Yuba	26	42	36	25	25
Total	75,346	77,560	86,637	94,657	108,740

Source: Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau.

Note: The Office of the Auditor General did not audit these data.

^aThis figure was provided by the County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Social Services.

**Appendix F Summary of Alameda County's
General Relief Program**



**Eligibility
Requirements**

To be eligible for general relief benefits in Alameda County, an applicant must be a resident of Alameda County, at least 18 years old or a married minor, and a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence.

Currently, an individual applicant's monthly gross income less specified exemptions must be less than \$340. The county also considers an applicant's real and personal property before granting assistance. For any month in which assistance is authorized, the net market value of personal property shall not exceed \$1,000. Items excluded from the consideration of personal property include, among other things, a home owned and occupied by the applicant, one motor vehicle with a market value of no more than \$2,500 less encumbrances, necessary household furnishings and clothing, and the value of equipment and tools necessary to continue or seek employment.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in Alameda County grew from a monthly total of 6,695 cases to 9,233 cases, an increase of 38 percent. We were unable to obtain accurate statistics to determine the number of general relief recipients who were employable because the information was not available in a format we could use.

Alameda County reported that it spent \$47.8 million to provide general relief benefits during the 18-month review period. The maximum monthly grants in Alameda County range from \$340 for an individual to \$1,467 for a family of ten or more. The county provides recipients cash and in-kind assistance.

**Work Program
Requirements**

Unless specifically exempted by the county, all general relief recipients are required to comply with the county's Employables Program. Recipients may be exempted from this program if they have been determined to be unemployable for a minimum of 30 days on the basis of a medical report. The county may also classify recipients exempt as a result of an administrative decision.

In Alameda County, there are several components of the Employables Program. Recipients are required to register for work with the State's Employment Development Department and to register with the county's Workfare Program. In the Workfare Program, recipients are required to work a certain number of hours per week, based upon the size of their grant and the minimum wage. For example, if recipients received a grant of \$340, they would be required to work 18 hours per week. There are no formal requirements for job search reporting in Alameda County's Employables Program. Recipients are required to be available for and seeking permanent employment during the regular weekday working hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. when not participating in another activity of the county's Employables Program.

Those recipients who are also receiving food stamps in Alameda County must meet additional requirements. When these recipients are initially approved for general relief benefits, some must attend a two-week class in job finding skills and other related topics and must contact 24 potential employers during an eight-week period to find employment.

Sanctions Alameda County sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program requirements only. The county mails notification to recipients that a sanction is proposed a minimum of 10 days before the effective date of the sanction. If during this time the recipients comply with the requirements or provide an explanation showing good cause for their noncompliance, the sanction will not be imposed.

Regulations require that before imposing a sanction, the county shall determine whether the noncompliance was due to circumstances beyond the recipient's control or to legal or moral obligations that directly prevented the recipient from complying with program requirements. If there is not good cause for failure to comply, then the county shall determine whether the noncompliance was willful on the part of the recipient. Sanctions will only be imposed for willful failure, without good cause, to comply with the requirements of the Employables Program.

The specific reasons for which the county sanctions general relief recipients are as follows:

- Failure to comply with work registration requirements or requirements to be available for and seeking employment;
- Failure to report to an Employables Program assignment or appointment, failure to conduct oneself appropriately at an Employables Program assignment or appointment, or failure to comply with an Employables Program assignment; and
- Refusal to accept employment.

Recisions and Hearings

The county will rescind sanctions if the recipient establishes good cause or nonwillfulness as described above. In addition, the recipient who cannot establish good cause or nonwillfulness may request an opportunity to comply with the county's requirement up to 10 days after the sanction begins. The sanction will be rescinded after the recipient complies with the requirements.

Additionally, a recipient who has been sanctioned may request an administrative hearing to appeal the sanction. If the recipient requests the hearing before the effective date of the sanction, general relief benefits will be paid until the hearing decision is made. The hearing shall be scheduled within 15 days of the receipt of the request for hearing, and the hearing officer must submit the decision within 5 working days of the hearing. The county did not segregate statistical data on hearings in a manner that identifies those hearings related to the sanctions in the general relief program until August 1990. Consequently, we could not obtain data regarding the outcome of appeals of sanctions in this county for our review period.

Analysis of Case File Review

We used data provided by the county's automated information system to determine that from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the county imposed 7,542 sanctions and rescinded 2,690 (approximately 36 percent) of the sanctions. To determine the reliability of the statistical reports, we conducted a file review of 50 sanction cases and 40 recision cases. The results of our review are as follows:

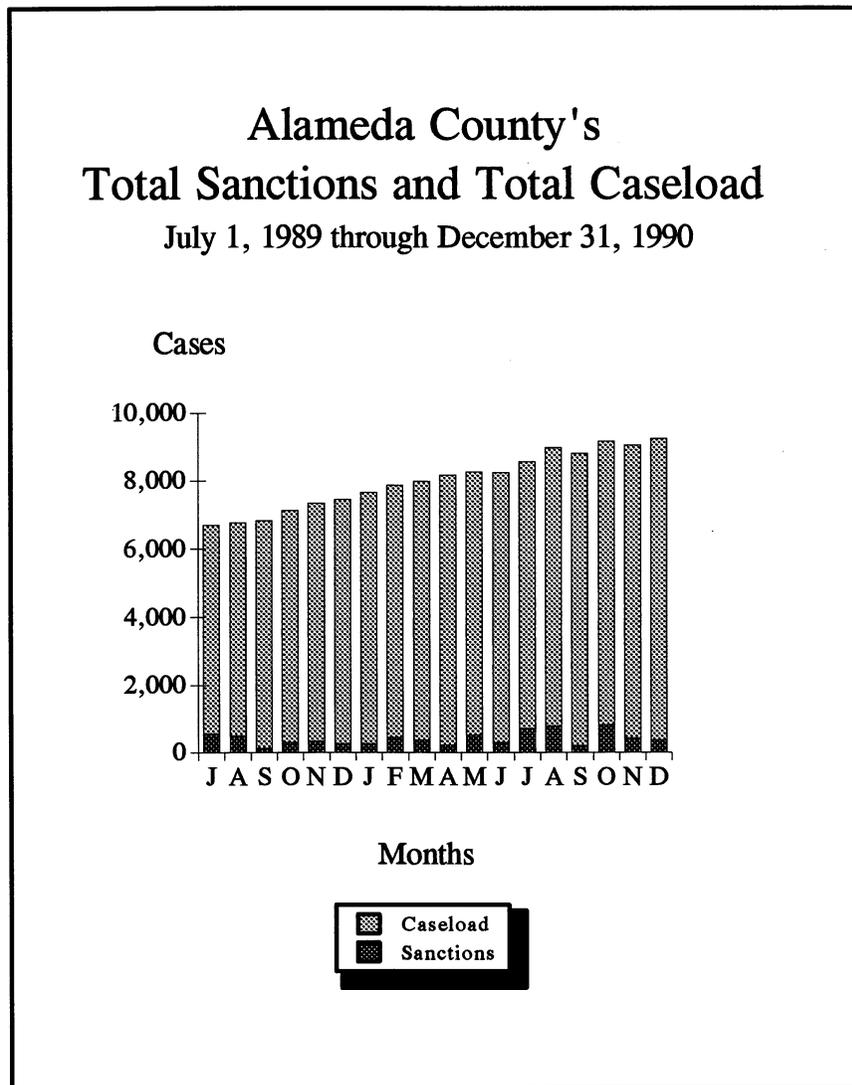
- We found no errors in the 50 sanction cases. Therefore, there is a 92.3 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 5 percent and a 99.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 10 percent;

- We found no errors in the 40 recision cases. Therefore, there is a 95 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 7.5 percent and a 97.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 9.25 percent; and
- Of the 27 sanctions that were not rescinded in the cases we reviewed, in 22 (81 percent) instances through the end of our review there was no evidence that the recipient returned to the general relief program after the sanction was imposed.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

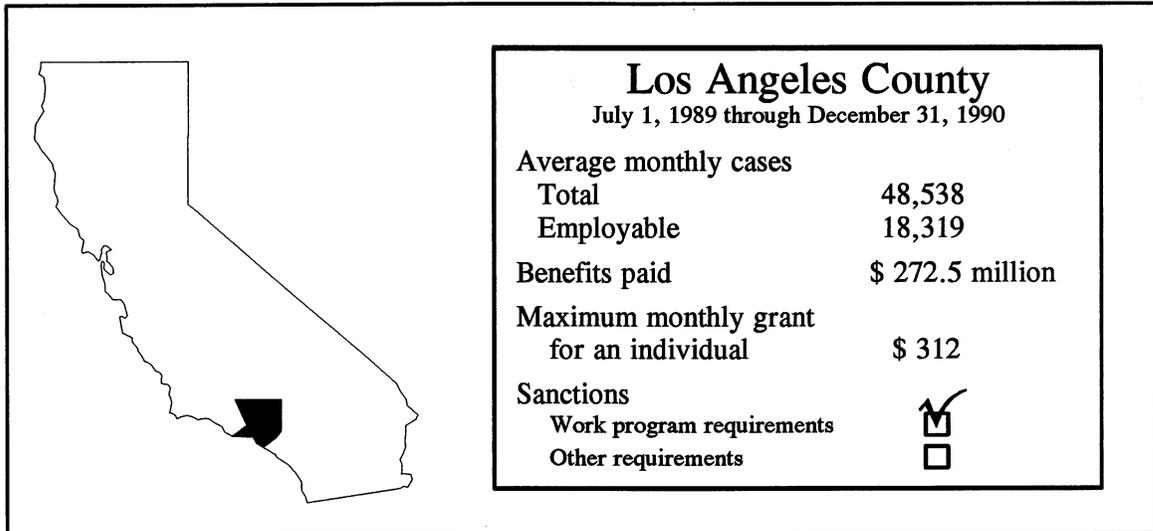
In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. Since Alameda County only sanctions employable recipients, the employable caseload would be the appropriate population to use in this analysis. However, as discussed earlier in this section, in Alameda County we could not accurately identify the employable caseload. Therefore, to do the trend analysis of sanctions, we used the total general relief caseload. Figure F-1 presents the relation between the total caseload and the total number of sanctions for the 18-month review period.

Figure F-1



Although the percentage of cases sanctioned varied among the 18 months, it remained within a range of 7 percentage points. During the period reviewed, the percentage of cases sanctioned ranged from 2 to 9 percent. Had we been able to determine the employable caseload in Alameda County, which is the segment of the population that is subject to sanction, we would expect the percentage of employable cases sanctioned to be higher than the percentage of total caseload sanctioned.

Appendix G Summary of Los Angeles County's General Relief Program



Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for general relief benefits in Los Angeles County, an applicant must be a resident of Los Angeles County and a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence.

During the period we reviewed, an individual applicant's monthly net income had to be less than \$312 if he or she lived alone. The county also considers an applicant's personal and real property before granting assistance. The value of personal property may not exceed \$500. Items excluded from the consideration of personal property include one motor vehicle with a market value not in excess of \$1,500 and cash not in excess of \$50. In addition, an applicant may own a home with a market value of \$34,000 or less.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in Los Angeles County grew from a monthly total of 45,563 cases to 54,179 cases, an increase of 19 percent. During this time, the number of cases that we estimate the county classified as employable increased 62 percent, from a monthly total of 14,034 to 22,679. Approximately 42 percent of Los Angeles County's general relief cases were classified as employable as of December 31, 1990.

Los Angeles County reported that it spent \$272.5 million to provide general relief benefits during the 18-month review period. The maximum monthly grant amounts in Los Angeles County ranged from \$312 for an individual to \$1,123 for a family of ten or more. The county provides recipients cash and in-kind assistance, such as vouchers for transportation and meals.

**Work Program
Requirements**

All employable recipients are required to comply with the requirements of the county's work program. Recipients are considered employable if they are between 18 and 65 years old, if they say they are able to work, or if they have been medically determined to be physically and emotionally able to accept employment.

In Los Angeles County, all employable recipients must perform the following activities to comply with work program requirements:

- Apply for Unemployment Insurance Benefits;
- Register for work with the State's Employment Development Department;
- Participate in the county's Workfare Project;
- Meet the county's job search requirements; and
- Accept a referral to or an offer of employment or job training.

To meet the county's job search requirements, recipients must contact 24 potential employers in an eight-week period at the time of application for general relief benefits and at the annual recertification for benefits. Unless specifically exempted by the county, employable recipients must also participate in the county's Workfare Project. In the Workfare Project, recipients are required to work at public and nonprofit agencies. The number of days that a recipient is required to work each month is determined by dividing the total amount of the recipient's grant by the State's minimum hourly wage.

Sanctions

Los Angeles County sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with its work program requirements only. When the county sanctions a recipient, it automatically sets a hearing date for the recipient to appeal the sanction. The county notifies recipients that a sanction is proposed a minimum of 7 days before the hearing date. If during this time the recipients provide an explanation showing good cause for their noncompliance, the sanction will not be imposed. County regulations state that sanctions will be imposed only when the recipients' failure to comply with requirements was "without good cause."

Regulations state that recipients may be sanctioned for failure, without good cause, to do the following:

- Attend a voluntary Job Club class or a scheduled appointment with the Employment Programs and Operations Section if the recipient was excused from the Workfare Project to attend the class or the appointment;
- Accept a referral to or an offer of employment;
- Attend an interview for an offer of or a referral to employment;
- Accept an offer of or referral to job training;

- Attend job training as scheduled;
- Accept assignment to the Workfare Project or to perform the work assigned;
- Perform required job search activities; or
- Register or reregister with the State's Employment Development Department.

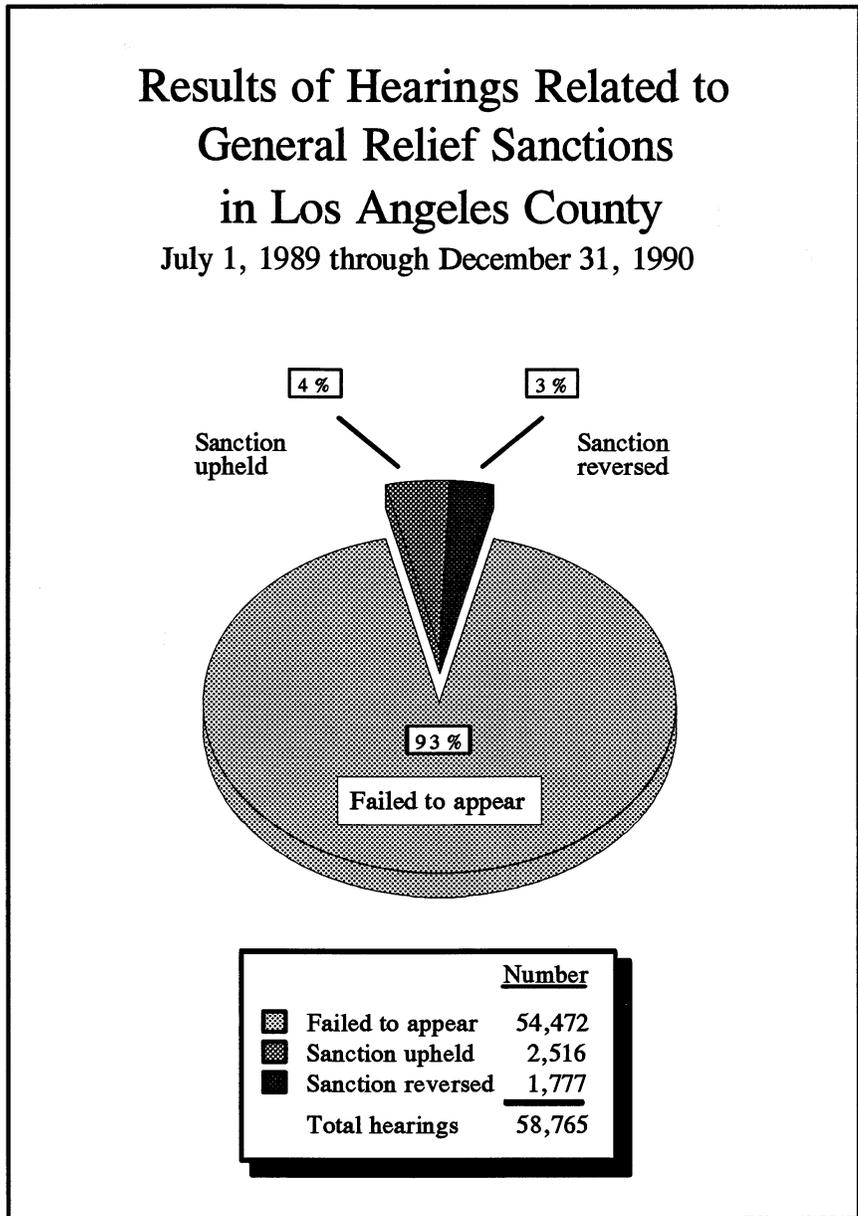
Applicants/recipients can also be sanctioned if they are fired from or quit a job without good cause or if they refuse or fail an employment related requirement in another county for which the other county imposed a sanction. In the latter case, the sanction period would be the period imposed by the other county or 60 days, whichever is less.

Rescissions and Hearings

Los Angeles County does not rescind sanctions as do the other five counties we visited. However, if the sanctioned recipients comply with requirements or establish good cause for the noncompliance, the county will waive the remainder of the sanction and allow the recipient to immediately reapply for general relief benefits.

In Los Angeles County, when recipients are sanctioned, the county automatically schedules a hearing for the recipients to appeal the sanction. The county notifies the recipients of the hearing date and time at the same time that the recipients are notified of the sanction. If the recipients appear for the hearing, the recipients are notified in writing of the decision within two days of the hearing. Los Angeles County was able to provide more data about hearings specific to sanctions of general relief recipients than some of the other counties we visited. Figure G-1 presents the results of our analysis of the additional data.

Figure G-1



According to the data provided by the county, approximately 16 percent of the hearings scheduled were resolved prior to the hearing. Of the remaining scheduled hearings, as Figure G-1 shows, in 93 percent the recipient failed to appear at the hearing. For those hearings that were held, the sanction was upheld in 59 percent and reversed in 41 percent of the cases.

**Analysis of
Case File
Review**

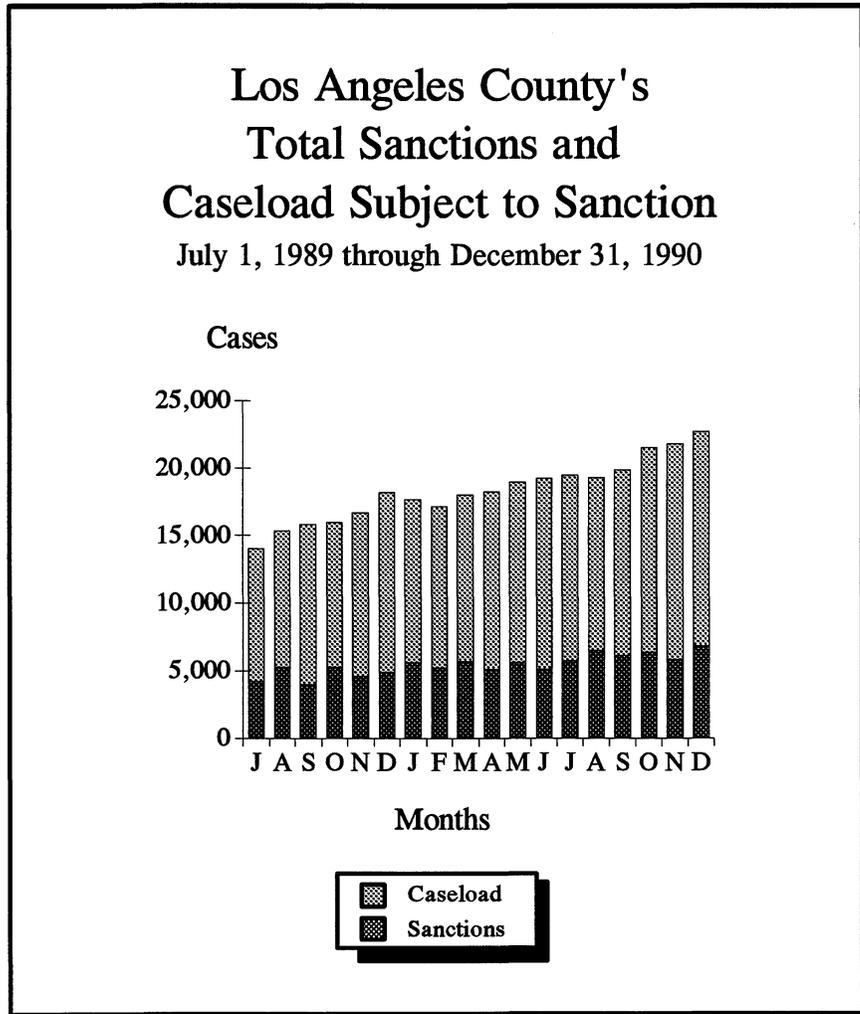
We used data provided by the county's automated information system to determine that from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990 the county imposed 98,066 sanctions. The county's system does not maintain information that allowed us to determine the number of those sanctions that were subsequently waived, allowing the recipient to immediately reapply for general relief benefits. To determine the reliability of the statistical reports we used to determine the number of sanctions imposed, we conducted a file review of 50 sanction cases. The results of our review are as follows:

- We found no errors in the 50 sanction cases. Therefore, there is a 92.3 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 5 percent and a 99.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 10 percent.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

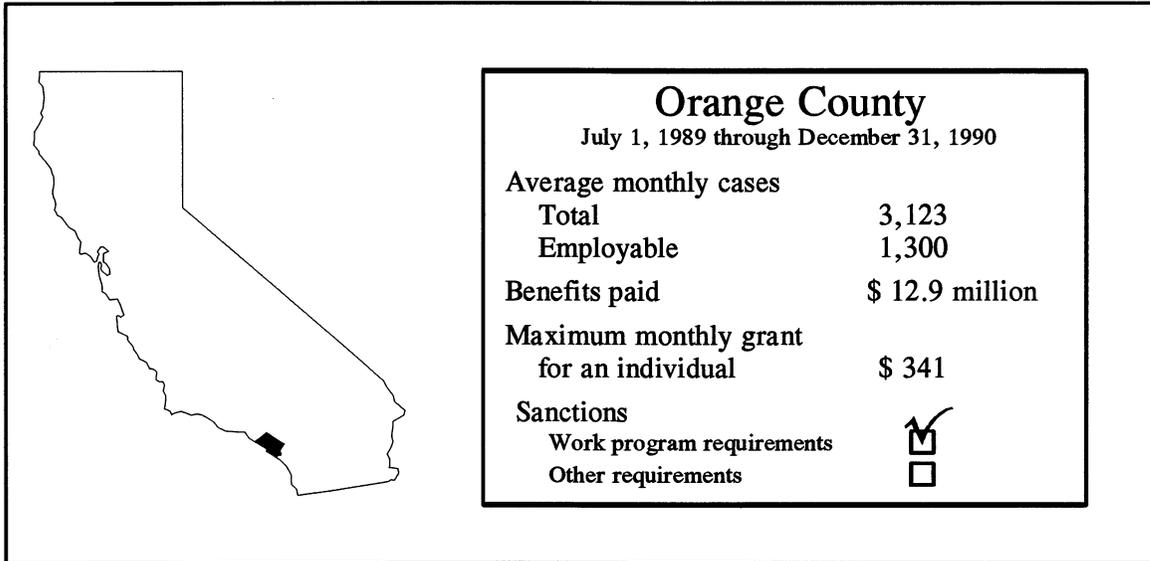
In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. Since Los Angeles County only sanctions employable recipients, we used our estimate of the employable caseload in this analysis. Figure G-2 presents the relation between the total number of sanctions and the caseload subject to sanction.

Figure G-2



Although the percentage of cases sanctioned varied among the 18 months, it remained within a range of 9 percentage points. During the period reviewed, the percentage of cases sanctioned ranged from 25 to 34 percent.

Appendix H Summary of Orange County's General Relief Program



Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for general relief benefits in Orange County, an applicant must be at least 18 years old or an emancipated minor. General relief benefits may also be provided when a minor is not emancipated but such aid is necessary to protect the health, safety, or well-being of the minor or when the minor is part of an eligible family case. An applicant must also be a citizen of the United States or an alien who legally has the right to remain in the United States and a resident of Orange County. Persons who are brought into Orange County directly to shelter care facilities, rescue missions, or similar facilities are not considered residents of Orange County for the purposes of general relief.

Currently, an individual applicant's monthly net income may not be over \$341. Liquid resources, such as cash, checking, and savings accounts, in excess of \$50 are considered income and are offset against the monthly grant. The county also considers an applicant's personal and real property before granting assistance. The value of personal property may not exceed \$1,000. Items

excluded from consideration of personal property include household furniture, engagement and wedding rings, heirlooms, tools and other items needed for employment, and one automobile valued at \$1,500 or less if the vehicle is needed to seek or maintain employment. In addition, an applicant's real property holdings may not exceed \$5,000.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in Orange County grew from a monthly total of 2,604 cases to 3,346 cases, an increase of 28 percent. During this same time, the number of cases the county classified as employable or conditionally employable increased by 56 percent, from a monthly total of 908 to 1,413. Approximately 42 percent of Orange County's general relief cases were classified as employable or conditionally employable as of December 31, 1990.

Orange County reported that it spent \$12.9 million to provide general relief benefits during the 18-month period we reviewed. The maximum monthly grant amounts in Orange County range from \$341 for an individual to \$1,468 for a family of ten or more. The county provides recipients cash and in-kind assistance, such as bus tickets for transportation to work project assignments and job search activities.

**Work Program
Requirements**

It is the county's policy that no individuals may be denied assistance solely on the basis of whether they are employable. However, employable applicants or recipients must participate in public or private employment to offset the amount of aid granted and must comply with the job search requirements of the county's work program.

Individuals are exempt from participation in the county's work program when they meet the following criteria:

- Have been determined incapacitated, conditionally employable, or are aided under Interim Assistance;
- Are children under age 16;
- Are children 16 or 17 years old who are full-time students in an elementary school, high school, vocational, or technical school;
- Are age 65 or older;
- Are adults responsible for the care of a member of their economic unit (household) on a substantially continuous basis due to the physical or mental impairment or incapacity of that member;
- Are the adult caretakers of a child under six in a single-parent case; or
- Are excluded members of the economic unit who receive Aid for Dependent Children, Refugee Cash Assistance, Entrant Cash Assistance, or Supplemental Security Income.

In the case of a family, when the principal wage earner is participating in and cooperating with requirements of the mandatory work program, the other adult caretaker is exempt (with some exceptions) from the county's work requirements.

Applicants/recipients who are not fully able but are not completely medically disabled may be classified by the county's medical review team as conditionally employable. In order for an applicant to be classified as conditionally employable, the county's medical review team has to establish that the applicant is affected by a combination of barriers to employability. One condition alone does not suffice. Conditions that are considered barriers are certain physical problems, age, legal problems, illiteracy, lack of work history, cultural and language limitations, and a history of substance abuse.

Once the recipient has been classified as conditionally employable, the county develops a case plan that specifies the activities required of the recipient, including work related activities the individual can participate in safely. Conditionally employable recipients are subject to general relief sanctions for refusal or failure to cooperate with the work program to the extent required by the case plan.

In Orange County, employable recipients are required to perform the following activities:

- Register with the county's work program;
- Cooperate with and follow all instruction from work program staff;
- Report to job sites as instructed and maintain satisfactory work habits;
- Conduct job search activities as required by the work program. Fully employable recipients are expected to file a minimum of two job applications on the days in which they are not at a work program work site or engaged in other activities required by the county;
- Accept job referrals made by work program staff; and
- Accept any offer of employment that pays at least minimum wage and for which the individual is qualified.

The number of hours that a work program participant is assigned to the work program is based on the monthly amount of general relief assistance divided by the State's minimum wage. The assignments shall not exceed 24 hours a week to ensure adequate time for job search activities.

Sanctions Orange County sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program requirements only. Before imposing the sanction, the county will wait one work day from the date of noncompliance to allow the recipient an opportunity to contact the county to explain the reason for the noncompliance. Orange County sanctions general relief recipients when the following conditions occur:

- Recipients agree to cooperate with the requirements of the work program and accept a job referral but subsequently refuse or fail to register or cooperate with the work program;
- Recipients voluntarily quit a job without good cause or cause an employer to terminate them because of violations of valid company rules or policies;
- Recipients refuse job referrals or job offers without good cause; and
- Recipients' employment is lawfully terminated due to participation in a strike.

Ninety-day sanctions are imposed when recipients voluntarily quit a job without good cause or cause the employer to fire them. Ninety-day sanctions are also imposed for the first incidence of noncooperation with work program requirements without good cause, including failure to register. A 180-day sanction is imposed each subsequent time there is an incidence of noncooperation without good cause within 12 months of the most recent incidence of noncooperation.

Recisions and Hearings Orange County rescinds sanctions when a client can establish good cause for not meeting the work program requirements of the general relief program. Examples of situations the county may consider as good cause for not having met the work program requirements of the general relief program include the following:

- Incarceration or hospitalization of recipient;
- Receiving treatment from a physician for an injury;
- Not accepting a job because the wages are below the state minimum wage;
- Encountering unforeseen problems preventing the recipient from traveling to and from the job, work site, or job search, for example, a bus driver's strike, the theft of the recipient's automobile, or unpredictable mechanical problems of the automobile;
- Round trip commute exceeds two hours; and
- Other circumstances beyond the recipient's control, for example, a death in the immediate family, a verified illness or injury of a household member, or medical appointments.

Additionally, a recipient who has been sanctioned may request an administrative hearing to appeal the sanction. The county does not segregate statistical data on hearings in a manner that identifies those hearings related to sanctions in the general relief program. Consequently, we could not obtain data regarding the outcome of appeals of sanctions in this county for our review period.

**Analysis of
Case File
Review**

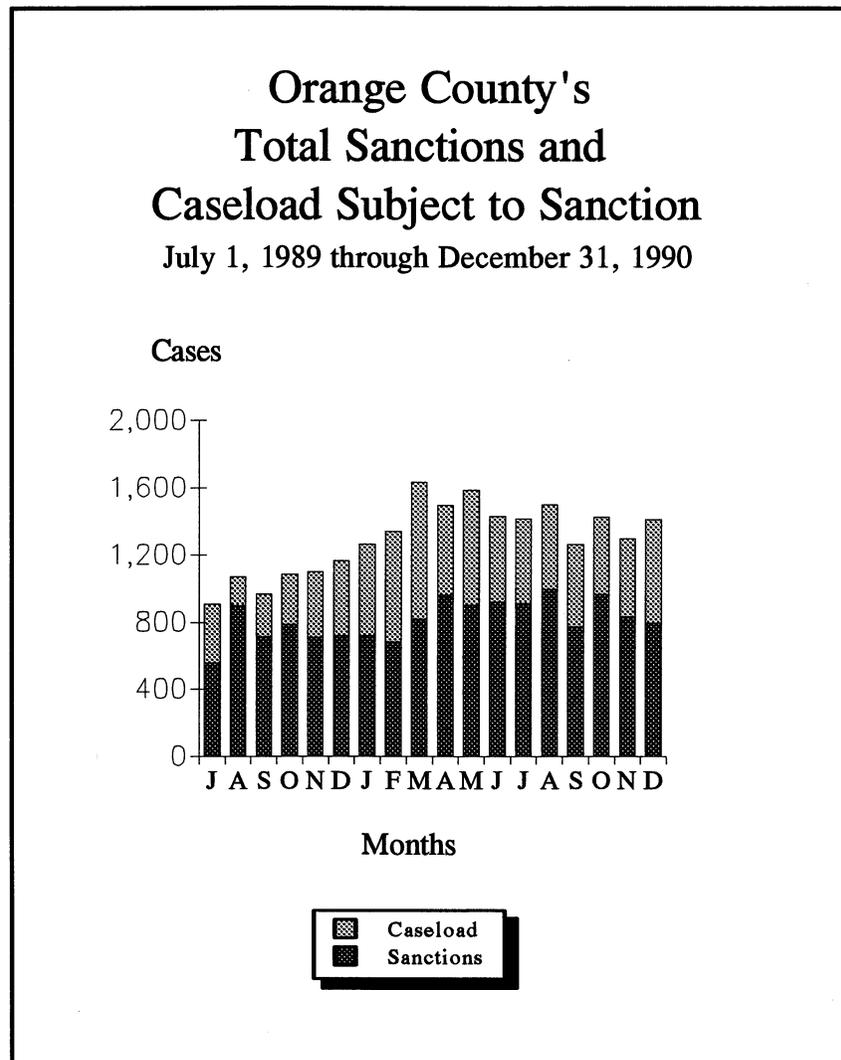
We used the data provided by the county's automated information system to determine that from July, 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the county imposed 14,697 sanctions. The county does not maintain comprehensive statistics on the number of rescissions of general relief sanctions. However, based on our case file review, we estimated that the county rescinded 1,837 (12 percent) of the sanctions. To determine the reliability of the statistical reports, we conducted a file review of 50 sanction cases. The results of our review are as follows:

- We found two errors in the 50 sanction cases. In both of these cases the situations warranted a denial instead of a sanction. These denials differ from sanctions in that the denials do not impose a specified period of ineligibility. Based on 2 errors in 50 cases reviewed, there is an 88 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data from the county's automated system is less than 10 percent.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

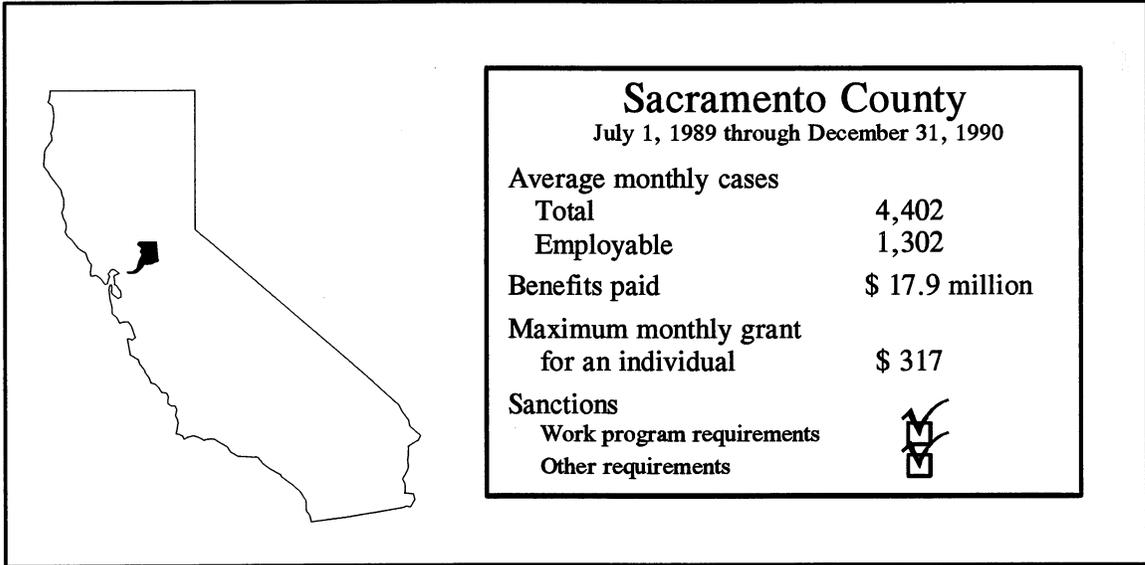
In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. Since only employable recipients are subject to sanctions in Orange County, we used the employable caseload for our review period in the analysis. Figure H-1 presents the relation between the total number of sanctions and the caseload subject to sanction.

Figure H-1



The percentage of cases sanctioned varied within a range of 34 percentage points during the 18 months. During the period reviewed, the percentage of cases sanctioned ranged from 50 to 84 percent. The county's average monthly sanction rate for the period of our review was 63 percent.

**Appendix I Summary of Sacramento County's
General Relief Program**



**Eligibility
Requirements**

To be eligible for general relief benefits in Sacramento County, an applicant must be a resident of Sacramento County, at least 18 years old or legally married, divorced or emancipated, and a citizen or lawful resident of the United States.

Currently, an individual applicant's monthly net, nonexempt income cannot be more than \$307. The county also considers any real and personal property applicants own or have an interest in before granting assistance. Applicants will not be granted assistance if they or their spouse or family unit members own real property assessed by the County Assessor at a combined value in excess of \$20,000. The limit on the value of personal property an applicant may own is \$250, with a limit on liquid resources of \$10. Exceptions to this \$250 limit are personal effects of nominal value, household furnishings necessary for the applicant's current use, tools essential in assisting in the self-support of the applicant, and one motor vehicle with a market value of \$1,500 or less.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in Sacramento County varied, from a high of 4,575 cases in January 1990 to a low of 4,164 cases in September 1990. During this time, the number of cases that the county classified as employable also varied, from a high of 1,456 cases in April 1990 to a low of 1,175 cases in October 1989. This caseload does not show a clear growth trend. Approximately 30 percent of the cases in Sacramento County were classified as employable as of December 31, 1990.

Sacramento County reported that it spent \$17.9 million to provide general relief benefits during the 18-month review period. The maximum monthly grant amounts in Sacramento County range from \$317 for an individual to \$1,520 for a family of ten. The county provides recipients cash and in-kind assistance, such as shelter.

**Work Program
Requirements**

Unless specifically exempted by the county, all general relief recipients are required to comply with the county's work program requirements. Recipients may be exempted if they are unable to participate in gainful employment as a result of temporary or permanent physical or mental disability.

In Sacramento County, to be eligible for general relief benefits, employable recipients must meet the following criteria and perform the following activities:

- Be unemployed;
- Register for work with the State's Employment Development Department;
- Attend the county's reemployment orientation meeting;
- Be consistently available for employment;
- Be continually and conscientiously in search of employment;

- Be willing and required to accept employment; and
- Cooperate with and carry out any specific vocational plan developed by the county's Department of Social Welfare.

As a condition of continuing eligibility, employable recipients must comply with job search requirements and participate in the county's Work Project. To meet the job search requirements, recipients must complete a job search form showing a minimum of 10 contacts with potential employers each month. Additionally, employable recipients must attend a monthly work project assignment meeting. At this meeting, they are assigned a work project. The number of work days assigned shall be based on the recipient's regular monthly grant and the State's minimum hourly wage. For example, if a recipient receives a grant of \$317, he or she would be required to work eight days that month, based on a minimum hourly wage of \$4.25.

Sanctions

Sacramento County sanctions employable and nonemployable general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of the general relief program. The county notifies recipients that a sanction is proposed a minimum of seven days before the effective date of the sanction. If during this time the recipients comply with the requirements or provide an explanation showing good cause for their noncompliance, the sanction will not be imposed.

Regulations specify a range of conditions that would constitute good cause, including requirements that are beyond the physical or mental capacity of the recipient, illness, incarceration, a death in the immediate family, lack of transportation, mistake or inadvertence, circumstances beyond the recipient's control, and other conditions excusing the recipient.

Some of the specific reasons for which the county sanctions general relief recipients include the following:

- Failure to keep a scheduled appointment;
- Failure to return requested verification, including the Medical Verification Form establishing exemption from the work program;
- Failure to apply for other financial resources, including Supplemental Security Income;
- Failure to comply with work program requirements;
- Failure to report a change in circumstances affecting eligibility; and
- Voluntarily quitting employment without good cause.

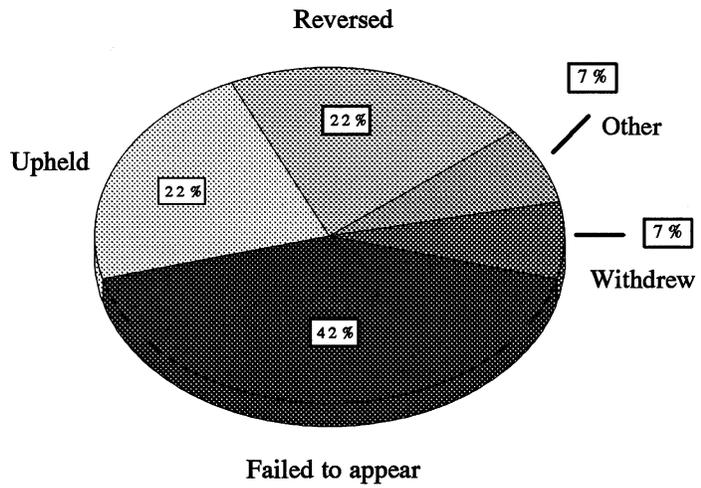
Recisions and Hearings

The county will rescind sanctions if the client establishes good cause as described above. Additionally, a recipient who has been sanctioned may request an administrative hearing to appeal the sanction. The recipient must request the hearing within 7 days of receipt or mailing of the notification of the sanction, whichever is earlier. The hearing is scheduled within 15 days after the county receives the request. Sacramento County was able to provide more data about hearings than some of the other counties we visited. Figure I-1 presents the results of our analysis of the additional data.

Figure I-1

Results of Hearings Related to General Relief Sanctions in Sacramento County

July 1, 1989 through December 31, 1990



No Hearing Held	
Failed to appear	74
Withdrew appeal	13
Hearing Held	
Sanction upheld	38
Sanction reversed	38
Other	12
Hearings scheduled	175

As Figure I-1 shows, in approximately 49 percent of the hearings scheduled, the recipient failed to attend or the request was withdrawn. For those hearings that were held, 43 percent upheld the sanction and 43 percent reversed the sanction. In another 14 percent, other decisions were made.

**Analysis of
Case File
Review**

Because Sacramento County does not keep comprehensive statistics on the number of sanctions or rescissions imposed on general relief recipients, we reviewed a randomly selected sample of 100 cases from the total population that received general relief benefits during our review period. The results of our case file review are as follows:

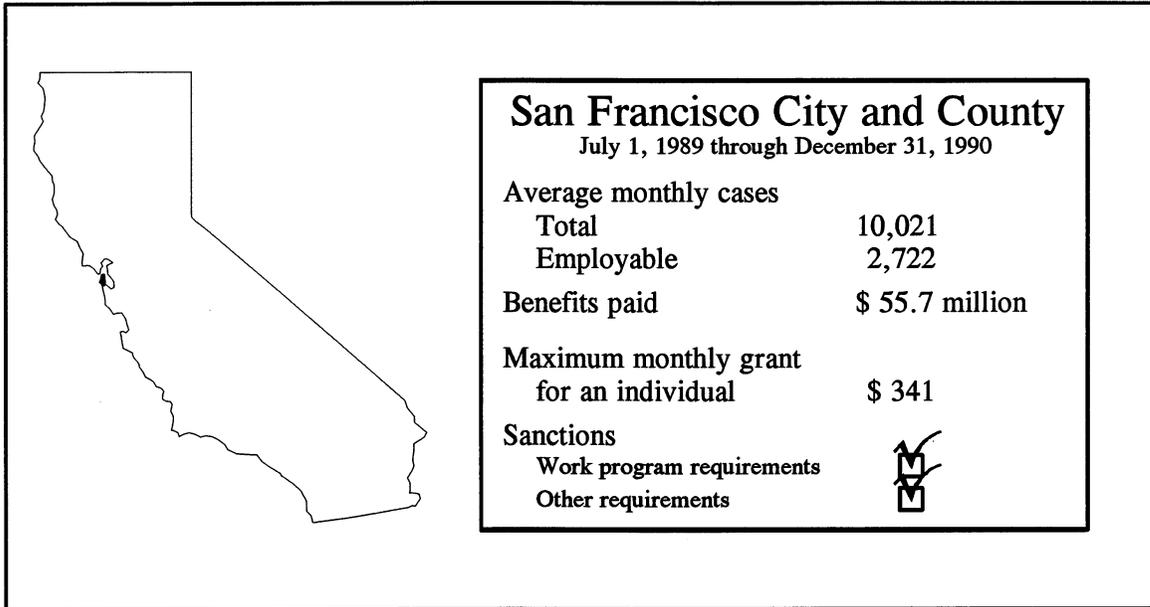
- Of the 100 cases, 29 contained sanctions imposed during the review period. In the 29 cases, there were a total of 48 sanctions. The number of sanctions per case during the period reviewed ranged from one to 5. Twelve of the 48 sanctions were rescinded. All of the sanctions we reviewed were for 30-day periods;
- Based on the above statistics and the fact that Sacramento County reported that a total of 21,062 cases received general relief benefits during our review period, we project that the point estimate for the total number of sanctions is 10,111 and the point estimate for the total number of rescissions is 2,527;
- Of the 36 sanctions that were not rescinded in the case files we reviewed, in 23 (64 percent) instances through the end of our review there was no evidence that the recipient returned to the general relief program after the sanction was imposed. Ten (28 percent) of the recipients (28 percent) returned to the program immediately after the sanction period expired, and the return of the remaining three recipients to the program ranged from one to 12 months after the sanction period expired; and

- Although the county sanctions recipients for requirements other than those of the work program, in 31 (65 percent) of the sanctions we reviewed, the sanction was due to noncompliance with work program requirements.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. However, in Sacramento County we were unable to obtain the data necessary to do this analysis since the county could not provide the number of sanctions imposed during each of the 18 months of our review.

Appendix J Summary of San Francisco City and County's General Relief Program



Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for general relief benefits in San Francisco City and County, an applicant must be a resident of San Francisco and at least 18 years old or legally married or divorced.

Further, an applicant's monthly net income and assets less specified exemptions shall not exceed the amount the county has established for the general relief grant. Currently, the maximum monthly grant for one person living alone is \$341. The county offsets an applicant's income and assets against the general relief grant amount with the following exceptions. An applicant may have \$25 in a checking or savings account, may own a home provided that the monthly housing expense does not exceed the maximum monthly grant amount, may own a motor vehicle with a cash value of \$900 or less, may own equipment and tools used in the individual's regular trade or work, and may own household furnishings and personal effects, exclusive of luxury jewelry. An applicant may also own insurance policies for funeral expenses not exceeding \$600 and an interment plot.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in San Francisco County grew from a monthly total of 8,657 cases to 10,997 cases, an increase of 27 percent. During this same time, the number of general relief cases the county classified as employable increased 33 percent, from a monthly total of 2,248 to 2,984. Approximately 27 percent of San Francisco's general relief cases were classified as employable as of December 31, 1990.

San Francisco reported that during our 18-month review period it spent \$55.7 million in general relief benefits. The maximum monthly grant amounts in San Francisco County range from \$341 for an individual to \$1,489 for a family of ten. The county provides recipients cash or in-kind assistance.

**Work Program
Requirements**

Recipients are presumed to be employable unless they are physically or mentally disabled. All general relief employable recipients are required to comply with the county's Workfare Program. The Workfare Program requires that these individuals accept any legitimate job offer, even if the job is not in their chosen field of employment. The county further requires that all employable applicants and recipients meet the following criteria and perform the following activities:

- Register for employment with the State's Employment Development Department;
- Be available for employment;
- Accept available employment unless refusal is based on good cause;
- Attend the county's general relief orientation and evaluation program;
- Conduct 20 verifiable job searches for each month they receive benefits;

- Cooperate with and carry out any job training, vocational, rehabilitation, or drug or alcohol treatment plans the county specifies; and
- Perform volunteer or other work assignments as made available by the county.

Recipients who are classified as unemployable are required to seek other means of support where available, including but not limited to support available under state and federal programs such as Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment benefits. Unemployable recipients are also required to enter into and cooperate in appropriate treatment and therapy programs designed to alleviate their disabling condition. Additionally, unemployable recipients are required to attend the county's general relief orientation program and to submit a medical or psychological evaluation within 10 days of a claim of disability.

Sanctions San Francisco County sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements. The county notifies recipients that a sanction is proposed a minimum of 10 days prior to the effective date of the sanction. If during this time the recipients comply with the requirements or provide an explanation showing good cause for their noncompliance, the sanction will not be imposed.

San Francisco sanctions general relief recipients when they willfully fail to comply with program requirements without good cause. Good cause may be established by providing written verification of illness, incarceration, employment or job interviews, mail delivery problems, a death in the immediate family, and other circumstances beyond the individual's control.

The reasons for which the county sanctions general relief recipients who fail to demonstrate good cause are as follows:

- Failure to present required information or verification when requested to do so;
- Failure to promptly report changes in the individuals' circumstances to the county; and
- Failure to keep scheduled appointments.

Recisions and Hearings

The county will rescind sanctions if the recipient establishes good cause as described above. In addition, the recipient who has not established good cause may request an opportunity to comply with the requirement in question up to three days after the sanction begins. The sanction will be rescinded after the recipient corrects the noncompliance.

Additionally, a recipient who has been sanctioned may request an administrative hearing to appeal the sanction. If the recipient's request for the hearing is prompt, general relief benefits may continue until the recipient is advised of the hearing decision. The county does not segregate statistical data on hearings in a manner that identifies those hearings related to sanctions in the general relief program. Consequently, we could not obtain data regarding the outcome of appeals of sanctions in this county.

Analysis of Case File Review

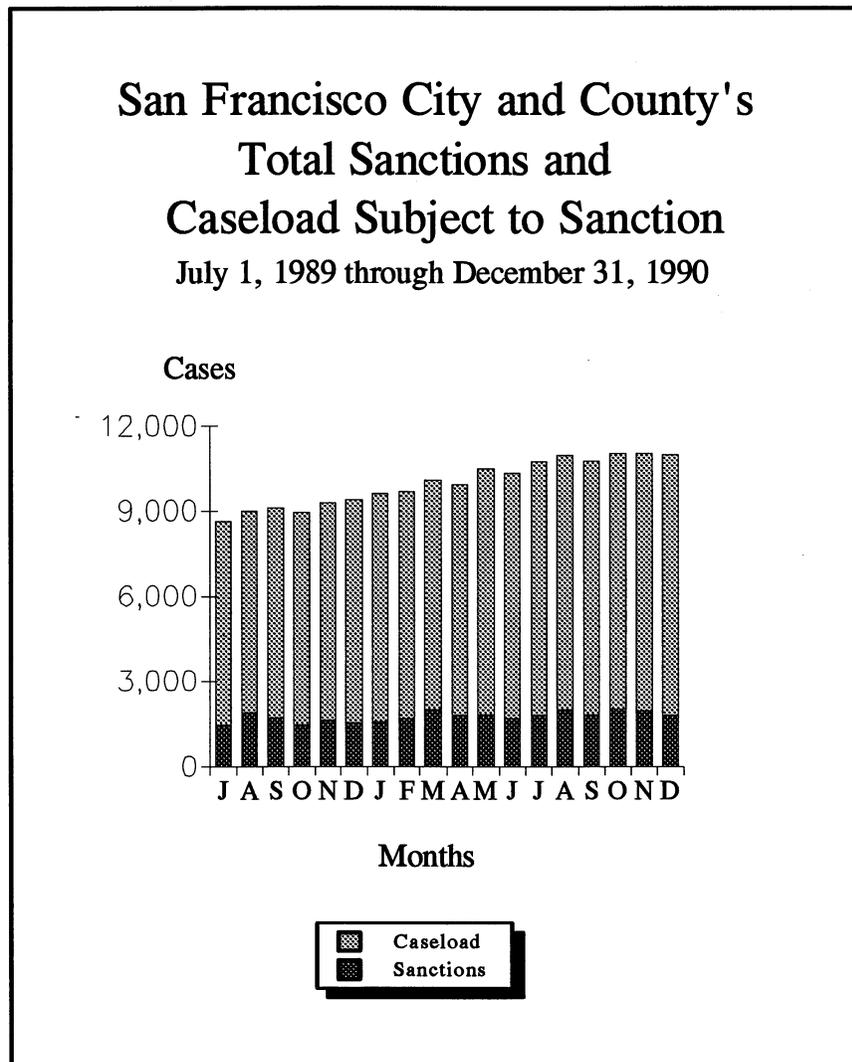
We used data provided by the county's automated information system to determine that from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the county imposed an estimated 32,189 sanctions and rescinded an estimated 7,856 (approximately 24 percent) of the sanctions. To determine the reliability of the statistical reports we conducted a file review of 50 sanction cases and 48 recision cases. The results of our review are as follows:

- We found no errors in the 50 sanction cases. Therefore, there is a 92.3 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 5 percent and a 99.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 10 percent;
- We found no errors in the 48 recision cases. Therefore, there is a 95 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 6.25 percent and a 97.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 7.7 percent;
- Of 35 sanctions we reviewed that were not rescinded, in 19 (54 percent) instances through the end of our review there was no evidence that the recipient returned to the general relief program after the sanction was imposed. The remaining 16 sanctioned recipients returned to the program from eight days to eight months after the sanction period expired; and
- Although the county sanctions recipients for requirements other than work program requirements, in 17 (34 percent) of the sanction cases we reviewed, the sanction was due to noncompliance with work program requirements.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

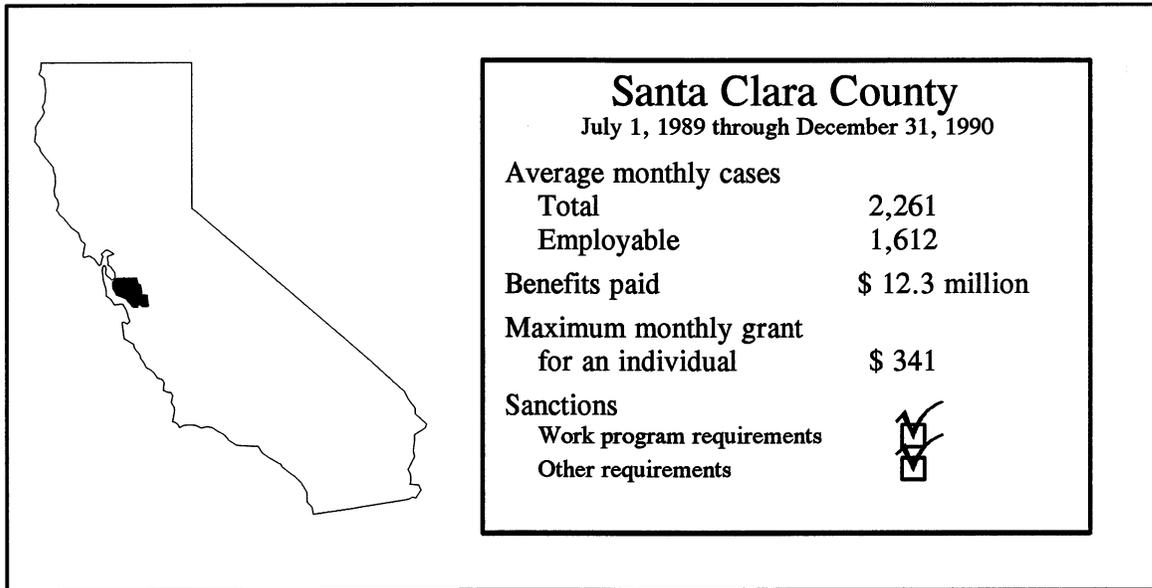
In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. Since both employable and unemployable recipients are subject to sanction in San Francisco County, we used the total caseload for our review period in this analysis. Figure J-1 presents the relation between the total number of sanctions and the caseload subject to sanction.

Figure J-1



Although the percentage of caseload sanctioned varied among the 18 months, it remained within a range of 4 percentage points. During the period reviewed, the percentage of cases sanctioned ranged from 17 to 21 percent.

Appendix K Summary of Santa Clara County's General Relief Program



Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for general relief benefits in Santa Clara County, an applicant must be a resident of Santa Clara County and at least 18 years old or a married minor. Aliens can establish residence in Santa Clara County if they have been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence or granted temporary legal residence under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Currently, an individual applicant's monthly gross income less specified exemptions must be less than \$341. The county also considers an applicant's personal and real property before granting assistance. To be eligible for assistance, the net market value of personal property shall not exceed an equity value of \$50. Items excluded from the consideration of personal property include, among other things, one motor vehicle at least five years old and with a gross market value of \$1,000 or less, necessary household furnishings and clothing, an irrevocable burial trust not exceeding

\$300, and personal property that is unavailable for the support of the applicant. In addition, an applicant may own a home that he or she occupies.

**Caseload and
Fiscal Data**

From July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the general relief caseload in Santa Clara County grew from a monthly total of 1,983 cases to 2,781 cases, an increase of 40 percent. During this time, the number of cases that we estimate the county classified as employable increased 43 percent, from a monthly total of 1,408 to 2,011. Approximately 72 percent of the cases in Santa Clara County were classified as employable as of December 31, 1990.

Santa Clara County reported that it spent \$12.3 million to provide general relief benefits during the 18-month review period. The maximum monthly grant amounts in Santa Clara County range from \$341 for an individual to \$1,468 for a family of ten. The county provides recipients cash and in-kind assistance, such as shelter and transportation passes.

**Work Program
Requirements**

Unless specifically exempted by the county, all general relief recipients whom the county has classified as employable are required to comply with the county's job search requirements and to participate in the county's Public Works Program. Recipients may be exempted from these requirements upon receipt of medical evidence that they have been determined to be unable to work. Recipients are also exempted if they are under public guardianship or conservatorship. The county may also classify recipients exempt from the Public Works Program if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Are 18 to 19 years old and attending high school full-time and are enrolled in the final semester;
- Have started working but are receiving general relief benefits pending receipt of initial wages;

- Receive a monthly grant that is less than 24 times the federal minimum hourly wage;
- Are participating in a training or rehabilitation program approved by the county; or
- Are determined by the county to be temporarily unable to participate in the Public Works Program or comply with the job search requirements.

To comply with Santa Clara County's job search requirements, employable applicants must make a good faith effort to make five face-to-face contacts with potential employers prior to participation in the Public Works Program. To receive continuing general relief benefits, employable recipients should make 18 face-to-face contacts with potential employers and 2 face-to-face contacts with the State's Employment Development Department each week. The recipients are further required to make an effort each workday to obtain employment. Specifically, they are to average four contacts with potential employers per workday. If recipients do not comply with all of the job search requirements, the county nevertheless can determine that the efforts made by the recipients to find employment constitute a good faith effort and thereby satisfy the requirements.

Employable recipients are also required to participate in the county's Public Works Program. These individuals are assigned to local governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations to perform tasks that serve the public interest. The maximum number of hours a participant may be required to work during a general relief pay period is determined by dividing the amount of the individual's grant by the State's minimum hourly wage. Recipients participating in the Public Works Program are expected to report to their work assignments on time and to perform work activities and comply with site regulations as directed by the site supervisor.

Sanctions Santa Clara County sanctions general relief recipients for noncompliance with work program and other requirements of the general relief program. However, only employable recipients are subject to sanction. The county notifies recipients that a sanction is proposed a minimum of seven days before the effective date of the sanction. If during this time the recipients comply with the requirements or provide an explanation showing good cause for their noncompliance, the sanction will not be imposed.

Before imposing a sanction, the county shall determine whether the recipient's noncompliance was willful and without good cause. Good cause refers to circumstances in which it would have been impossible or unreasonable to have expected the recipient to meet program requirements. Good cause is only considered when such circumstances are reported to the county before the time the act of compliance was required or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible. If there is not good cause for failure to comply, then the county shall determine whether the noncompliance was willful on the part of the recipient. Sanctions will only be imposed for willful failure, without good cause, to comply with the requirements.

The specific reasons for which the county sanctions general relief recipients are as follows:

- Failure to comply with the Public Works Program;
- Failure to remain available for full-time employment or accept an offer of employment;
- Failure to maintain an active registration with the State's Employment Development Department;
- Failure to take necessary and reasonable actions to rehabilitate or retrain themselves as required by the county;
- Failure to make reports required by the county;

- Failure to complete the forms or attend the meetings to determine the continuing entitlement to aid; and
- Failure to make a good faith effort to obtain employment.

Recisions and Hearings

The county will rescind sanctions if the client establishes good cause or nonwillfulness as described above. In addition, the recipient who cannot establish good cause or nonwillfulness may request a hearing to appeal the sanction. If recipients request the hearing within seven days of the date they are notified of the sanction, general relief benefits will be paid until the hearing decision is made. Table K-1 presents the results of our analysis of the hearing data provided by the county.

Table K-1 Results of Hearings Related to General Relief Sanctions in Santa Clara County October 17, 1989 Through December 17, 1990

Hearings Held	Sanctions Upheld	Sanction Reversed ^a
38	13 (34 percent)	25 (66 percent)

^aIncludes cases in which the sanction was partially reversed.

Analysis of Case File Review

We used data provided by the county’s automated information system to determine that from July 1, 1989, through December 31, 1990, the county imposed 3,056 sanctions and rescinded 1,062 (approximately 35 percent) of the sanctions. To determine the reliability of the statistical reports, we conducted a file review of 50 sanction cases and 50 recision cases. The results of our review are as follows:

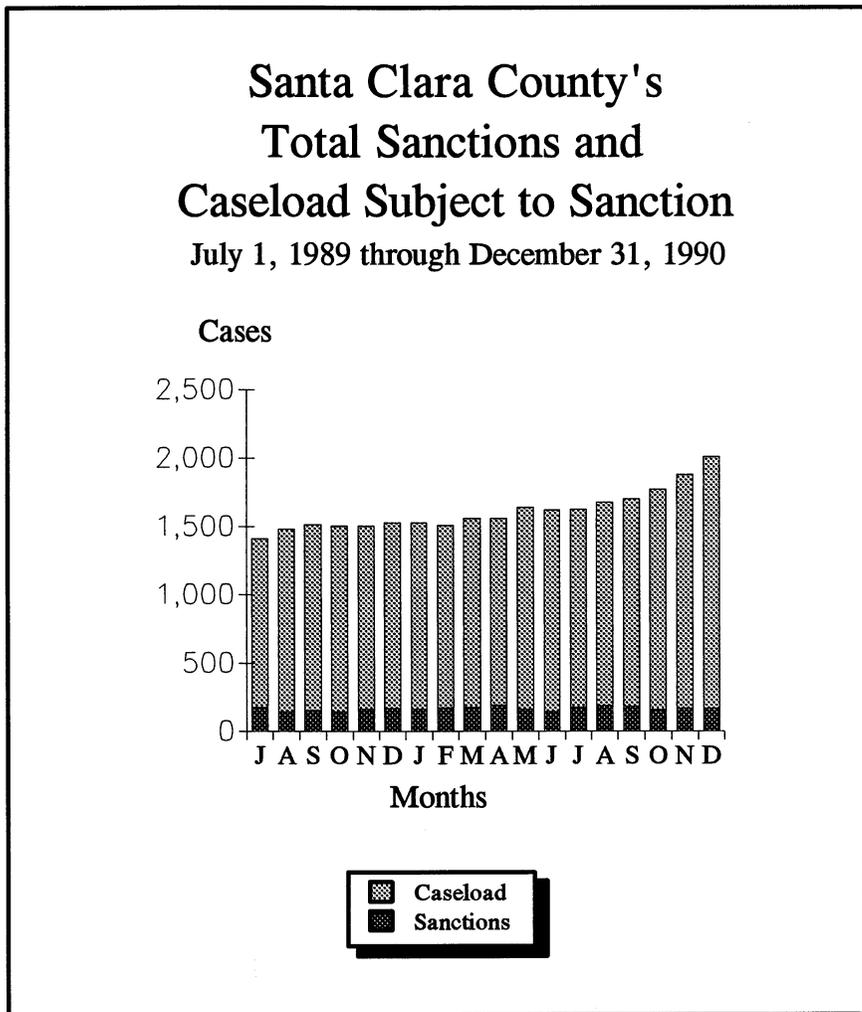
- We found no errors in the 50 sanction cases. Therefore, there is a 92.3 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data is less than 5 percent and a 99.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 10 percent;

- We reviewed 50 recision cases and found that all 50 were rescissions. Therefore, there is a 92.3 percent probability that the error rate in the statistical data on the total number of rescissions is less than 5 percent and a 99.5 percent probability that the error rate is less than 10 percent. However, 3 of the 50 rescissions we reviewed were not related to sanctions within the general relief program. Therefore, based on the county's information that there was a total of 1,130 rescissions, we estimated that 68 of these rescissions would not be related to sanctions within the general relief program. Therefore, we project that the point estimate for the total number of rescissions related to general relief sanctions during our review period is 1,062;
- Of the 29 sanctions we reviewed that were not rescinded, in 17 (59 percent) of the instances through the time of our review there was no evidence that the recipient returned to the general relief program after the sanction was imposed. The remaining 12 sanctioned recipients returned to the general relief program either immediately after the sanction expired or within 8 months of that time.
- Although the county sanctions recipients for requirements other than those of the work program, in 25 (50 percent) of the sanction cases we reviewed, the sanction was due to noncompliance with work program requirements.

**Trend Analysis
of Sanctions as
a Percentage
of Caseload**

In each county we visited, we attempted to analyze the sanctions as a percentage of the caseload subject to sanction. Since Santa Clara County only sanctions employable recipients, we used our estimate of the employable caseload in this analysis. Figure K-1 presents the relation between the total number of sanctions and the caseload subject to sanction.

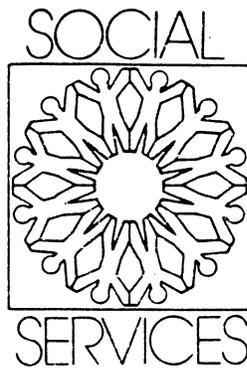
Figure K-1



Although the percentage of cases sanctioned varied among the 18 months, it remained within a 5 percent range. During the 18-month period reviewed, the percentage of cases sanctioned ranged from 8 to 13 percent.

SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY

County of Alameda
401 Broadway
Oakland, California 94607
(415) 268- 2222
TDD (415) 834-9434



Department on Aging
Department of Economic Benefits
Department of Human Services
Public Guardian/Conservator

HELEN KNUDSON, DIRECTOR

August 9, 1991

Kurt R. Sjoberg - Acting Auditor General
State of California
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft of your report entitled "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Relief Assistance Programs In Six Counties."

We would like to respond to comments in the report (footnote a, page 13 and page 30) regarding the total employables caseload. Alameda County does track and provided data to your office on the number of employable recipients in the General Assistance program in a format that is usable for our purposes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Engelhard".

Patricia Engelhard
Assistance Agency Director
Economic Benefits Department



EDDY S. TANAKA
DIRECTOR

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

3401 RIO HONDO AVENUE, EL MONTE, CALIFORNIA 91731/TEL: (818) 572-5720
P.O. BOX 5493, EL MONTE, CALIFORNIA 91731

August 9, 1991

Kurt R. Sjoberg
Acting Auditor General
State Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

GENERAL RELIEF PROGRAM REVIEW OF DURATIONAL PENALTIES

Attached you will find our Departmental comments to the draft report on the above stated review conducted in Los Angeles County during the period of April 22-25, 1991.

I appreciate the opportunity of commenting on your draft report entitled "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Assistance Programs in Six Counties".

Should there be any questions on this material, your staff may contact Charles R. Ventura, Chief of Management Information and Evaluation Division, at (818) 572-5654.

Very truly yours,

EDDY S. TANAKA, DIRECTOR

EST:sd

Attachment

LOS ANGELES COUNTY RESPONSE
TO THE STATE AUDITOR GENERAL'S DRAFT REPORT:
"AN ANALYSIS OF SANCTIONS WITHIN THE GENERAL RELIEF/
GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN SIX COUNTIES"

Page 35 ; Appendix E

The average monthly number of cases receiving GR benefits in Los Angeles County for FY 1990-91 should be revised. We have already forwarded your staff copies of the GR237 reports for the entire fiscal year as supporting documentation. The correct average amount should be 53,804. ①

Page 43 ; Appendix G

Effective July 1, 1991, Los Angeles County increased its basic General Relief benefits for all recipients. Therefore, in the second paragraph, we suggest deleting "currently" and rewording the first sentence to reflect that during the review period the "monthly net income needed to be less than \$312..." ①

Page 44

In the third paragraph, third sentence, we suggest the word "range" be changed to the past tense, "ranged". ①

Page 45 ; Work Program Requirements

The last paragraph that states that "all employable recipients are required to comply with the requirements of the county's work program" is not accurate. Recipients who are able to work may be exempted temporarily from the Workfare Project assignments and job search for the following reasons:

- Enrollment in a DPSS-recognized vocational or educational program that will lead to gainful employment.
- Short term illness.
- Participation in the DPSS Job Club/Job Prep Program.

To currently reflect DPSS policy, the exemptions should be mentioned in this section. ①

Page 45 ; Sanctions

The second sentence in the first paragraph is misleading. We suggest that the phrase "effective date of sanction" be changed to "hearing date". ①

① The Office of the Auditor General's Comment: The text has been changed to reflect these comments.



County of Orange
SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
1055 N. MAIN STREET, SUITE 600
SANTA ANA, CA 92701-3607
(714) 541-7700

LARRY M. LEAMAN
DIRECTOR
ROBERT A. GRIFFITH
CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR

August 9, 1991

Kurt R. Sjoberg, Acting Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

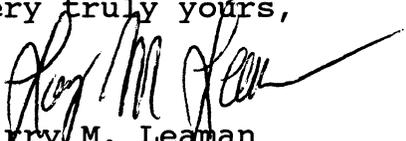
Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

We have received and reviewed the draft copy of the report entitled "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Assistance Programs in Six Counties." Overall we believe that the report satisfactorily presents information relating to the Orange County General Relief Program.

The report concludes that it could not be determined whether sanctioned individuals did not return to the program because they had been sanctioned or if recipients failed to comply with program requirements because they were no longer interested in or eligible for general relief benefits. It is our belief that Orange County's low unemployment rate supports an assumption that many of these individuals do secure employment and merely do not inform the Agency, resulting in a noncompliance sanction. Additionally, there tends to be a high incidence of mobility within this population, furthering the theory that people often willingly leave the program but fail to advise Agency staff.

Thank you for affording us the opportunity to review the draft report.

Very truly yours,


Larry M. Leaman
Director

jm



**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

2433 Marconi Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95821-4807

PHONE (916) 978-2111

DENNIS B. HART
director

August 8, 1991

PENELOPE CLARKE
*deputy director
public assistance
&
administration*

Mr. Kurt R. Sjoberg
Auditor General (acting)
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

EVELYN L. JOSLIN
*deputy director
social services*

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on your draft report entitled, "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Assistance Programs in Six Counties."

We have no disagreement with your findings concerning Sacramento County.

Sincerely,

PENELOPE CLARKE
Director

PC:DW:mh



Julia I. Lopez
General Manager

Claude E. Finn
Deputy General Manager

Assistant General Managers

Ann O' Rielly

Rose Lou Randolph

John R. Vera

August 9, 1991

Kurt R. Sjoberg, Acting Auditor General
State of California
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the draft of "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Assistance Programs in Six Counties, August 1991."

The report is acceptable with a few minor exceptions. My staff has communicated with Mr Glenn Fowler of your office and they have agreed on the modifications.

Thanks again, and I look forward to seeing the final report.

Sincerely,

Rose Lou Randolph
for Julia I. Lopez
General Manager

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

1725 Technology Drive
San Jose, California 95110-1360



August 7, 1991

Office of the Auditor General
Mr. Kurt R. Sjoberg
Auditor General (Acting)
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

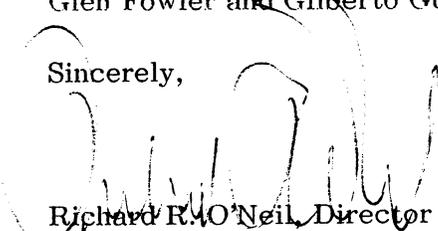
I have reviewed the findings contained in the draft copy of your report entitled "An Analysis of Sanctions Within the General Relief/General Assistance Programs in Six Counties". The findings reflect the information shared verbally by your staff at the exit interview.

Although your report accurately describes the General Assistance program in Santa Clara County, I want to share with you significant changes that are in the process of being implemented. On July 10th, the Superior Court approved the negotiated settlement between the County and Legal Aid Society regarding the Jennings v Jones lawsuit. Some of the changes agreed to as a result of the settlement include the following:

- sanctions will apply only to specified work program requirements.
- the ninety day sanction has been eliminated.
- automatic appeal hearing required prior to the imposition of any sanction.

I want to express my appreciation of the very professional and amicable manner in which Glen Fowler and Gilberto Guadiana conducted their work in Santa Clara County.

Sincerely,


Richard R. O'Neil, Director
Social Services Agency

RRO:er

91



**cc: Members of the Legislature
Office of the Governor
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
State Controller
Legislative Analyst
Assembly Office of Research
Senate Office of Research
Assembly Majority/Minority Consultants
Senate Majority/Minority Consultants
Capitol Press Corps**