



DARYL G. PURPERA,  
CPA, CFE

# Report Highlights

## Strategies to Empower People Program

Department of Children and Family Services

Audit Control # 40150004

Performance Audit Services • September 2015

The STEP Program provides opportunities for eligible families on cash assistance to receive job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

### Why We Conducted This Audit

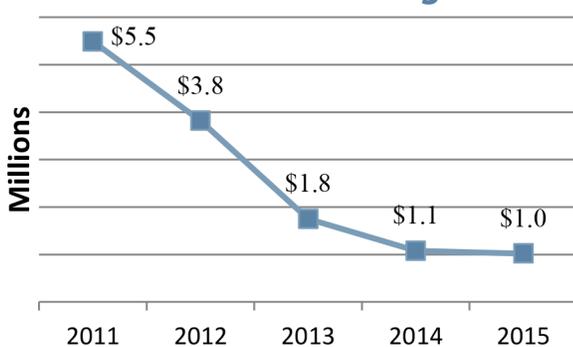
The purpose of this audit was to evaluate the progress DCFS has made toward addressing the two primary issues identified in our 2012 performance audit on the Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Program. In that audit, we found that DCFS did not sufficiently oversee the STEP program to ensure that transportation costs were reasonable, and the STEP program was not meeting its performance target of 40% of participants leaving the program with employment.

### What We Found

DCFS has either addressed or is in the process of addressing the two issues by making significant changes to the STEP program as detailed below.

**DCFS has reduced transportation costs by 81%, from approximately \$5.5 million in fiscal year 2011 to just over \$1 million in fiscal year 2015.** This reduction is due, in part, to offering participants a monthly \$100 stipend rather than contracting for transportation services and reimbursing mileage, as well as no longer providing transportation assistance after participants leave the program with employment. Fewer participants in the STEP program also contributed to decreased transportation costs.

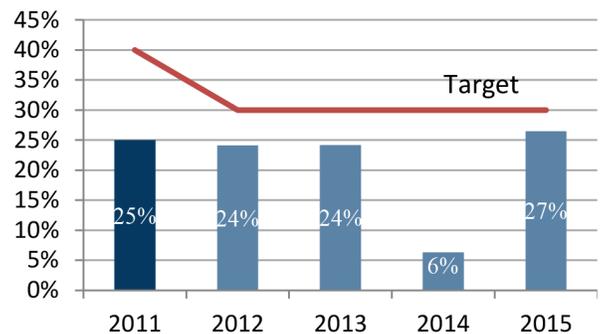
**STEP Transportation Costs  
Fiscal Years 2011 through 2015**



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from DCFS.

**While DCFS has still not achieved its employment goal for STEP participants leaving the program, the agency recently entered into a contract with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to assist in job placement.** DCFS stated that a more immediate, in-depth connection with LWC and the job market will increase the likelihood that STEP participants will leave the program with employment.

**Percentage of STEP Participants  
Leaving with Employment  
Fiscal Years 2011 through 2015**



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from DCFS.