



CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR

Elaine M. Howle, State Auditor

FACT SHEET

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The California State Auditor released the following report today: **California Department of Education**

Despite Some Improvements, Oversight of the Migrant Education Program Remains Inadequate

BACKGROUND

Administered by the California Department of Education (Education), California's federally funded migrant education program (migrant program) provides supplemental education services to migrant children. Education contracts with 14 county offices of education, which serve as regional offices, and contracts directly with nine school districts to supply services to migrant children. Education annually reviews and approves regional applications for migrant program funds. To ensure effective parent involvement, the state parent council—whose members are elected from regional parent councils—participates in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the migrant program and at least two-thirds of its members must be migrant parents.

KEY FINDINGS

During our review of the federally funded migrant program, we noted the following:

- Education's insufficient oversight of the migrant program and inadequate guidance to regions that administer services have created inconsistencies and disagreements regarding the allowable uses of migrant funds.
 - ✓ The fiscal handbook meant to guide regions in the use of migrant program funds provides little direction for categorizing certain types of expenditures and leaves much to the individual judgment of regional administrators and program staff regarding what is reasonable and necessary.
 - ✓ Education's oversight of regional expenditures has not extended beyond the annual regional application process—conducted by staff who had not recently received training—and a federal program review of which the migrant program office has no control over the frequency or locations of the reviews.
 - ✓ Although most of the expenditures we reviewed in the eight migrant program regions we visited appeared allowable, Education's migrant program office does not receive detailed quarterly expenditure reports from the regions and does not regularly perform expenditure reviews of the regions and thus cannot adequately oversee their fiscal activity.
- Although most regions we visited have adequate fiscal controls, the former regional director in San Joaquin County may have violated two of California's key conflict-of-interest laws in awarding contracts to businesses owned by her and her spouse.
- In calculating regional administrative costs, Education used a flawed approach and did not solicit adequate input from the regional directors, which further strained its relationship with this potentially valuable source of program experience.
- High turnover among management and staff in Education's migrant program office has presented challenges to effective program management—the administrator position alone has been filled by four different individuals over the past three years.
- Although required to do so, Education has not evaluated the migrant program's effectiveness nor does it have sufficiently detailed data to do so. In fact, a contractor hired to prepare a statewide evaluation found that it could evaluate only nine of the 18 measurable outcomes in the migrant education statewide plan—and for eight of those nine it had to base its conclusions on alternative measures instead of those outlined in the statewide plan.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We made numerous recommendations to Education including that it better define the criteria for what costs it will consider allowable. We also made recommendations aimed at collecting consistent and detailed information to address problems with its methodology for calculating administrative costs. Other recommendations are geared toward determining whether the migrant program is effective and advise Education to capture more detailed data about migrant students, finalize its current evaluation of the program, and develop a plan for annually producing a more robust evaluation.

