

# What to watch: Personal income

## WHAT IT IS

The Commerce Department estimates the income received by households from employment, self-employment, investments and transfer payments.

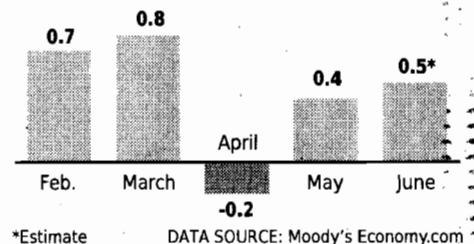
## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Household balance sheets help determine consumer spending trends.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Economists expect a slight increase for June, from the previous month.

## Personal income, percent change



## BURNING QUESTIONS

*Ken Wessel is executive director of HomeCare Options, a non-profit home-care agency based in Paterson.*



WESSEL

**Q.** Home health agencies are having a tough time keeping aides. Why is there so much turnover?

**A.** The turnover is high be-

cause the pay and benefits aren't usually competitive due to low government reimbursement rates. The average home-care aide in New Jersey, according to the New Jersey Department of Labor, is making about \$10.10 per hour.

**Q.** I understand your agency is using a unique retention strategy. What are you doing?

**A.** We just sent a group of 30 children of our home health

aides to summer camp. We give our aides scholarships to go to nursing school. We give the children and grandchildren scholarships for college and provide our aides with GED and ESL (English as a Second Language) training right in our office. We also help our aides apply for citizenship and pay the fee.

**Q.** Isn't it costly to offer these benefits?

**A.** Some of them are costly, some of them are free, but as a

nonprofit agency, we solicit donations to cover the scholarships. We offer the camping experience at no cost through the county of Passaic.

**Q.** How do you know your strategies are paying off?

**A.** When we calculate our turnover rate, it is significantly below the region's average of 24 percent. The average tenure of our 300-plus home health aides is 10 years.

— Angela Stewart