IWPR Welfare Reform Network News
A Newsletter of the Institute for Women's Policy Research

MULTI-STATE WELFARE MONITORING PROJECTS

Welfare devolution, in the form of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), has not only changed the principles and policies of the U.S. welfare system, but has also created much confusion due to gaps or ambiguities in the text of the law. One of the most troubling aspects of the new law is the lack of incentive to evaluate new programs and services. Previously, such evaluations were required by the Family Support Act of 1988. Instead of tying evaluation efforts to grant receipt, the PRWORA directs the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to encourage states to continue evaluation of their waivers through random sampling, control groups, and other accepted experimental methods. It also authorizes $15 million annually for research activities (from fiscal year 1997 through fiscal year 2002), half of which DHHS is to allocate for federally initiated research and half for state-level evaluations. Thus, the quality, scope, and very existence of welfare reform research and evaluation efforts are left to the discretion of individual states and concerned researchers and advocates.

At this juncture, welfare monitoring projects are crucial for the assessment of the impact of the PRWORA. Some of the critical questions include what policies and programs states tend to implement, the cost-effectiveness of these programs, whether these efforts increase or decrease the well-being of low-income families, what segments of the population are most affected by policy changes, and how these individuals are affected. In this newsletter, we describe several major multi-state welfare monitoring projects currently underway. While we have tried to collect as much data as possible on large welfare monitoring efforts, there may be efforts that are not covered here.

Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR)

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research’s (IWPR) Coordinating Nationwide Research Efforts on Welfare is a year-long start-up effort to work with researchers and advocates in order to develop indicators that assess the effects of welfare devolution on the well-being of poor women and their children. One of the primary outcomes of this project will be a model research and education program for welfare practitioners, advocates, and researchers nationwide. As one step towards this meeting this goal, IWPR distributes this newsletter detailing welfare reform policy issues and research efforts. The Institute has also established a database of approximately 130 researchers, advocates, policymakers, and service providers representing 30 states, and it oversees a listserv (electronic bulletin board) devoted to the discussion of welfare reform (see the end of this newsletter for instructions on how to sign-on to the listserv).

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Among the goals of this project are:

- To work with researchers in the states to develop a consistent set of indicators that can be used to measure outcomes across state programs.
- To develop a set of research designs, protocols, and guidelines for conducting a multi-year coordinated assessment of welfare reform.
- To promote on-going dialogue among researchers, advocates, service providers, and policymakers.

This project is funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more information on IWPR’s welfare monitoring project, please call Jackie Chu at (202) 785-1921, send an e-mail message to chu@www.iwpr.org, or visit IWPR’s website at http://www.iwpr.org.

Abt Associates

Abt Associates is a private consulting firm that specializes in social and economic policy research and analysis. Their clients include state and federal government agencies, corporations, and international organizations. Abt is currently testing welfare demonstration projects for Indiana, Michigan, Delaware, and Arizona; they recently completed a similar study examining Ohio, Illinois, New York, and Alabama. In these studies, Abt compares the performance of treatment groups (consisting of participants in the welfare demonstration project) and control groups (those who remain on the regular welfare plan) on employment and earnings measures, welfare participation and payments, child support payments, and participation in employment and training. According to Abt researchers, since many states’ TANF plans are essentially the same as the welfare demonstration projects, to date welfare reform has not had a significant impact on Abt’s research efforts. However, Abt researchers interviewed by IWPR do not think that states intend to continue evaluations. For example, although Indiana will maintain it’s control group/treatment group experimental design, its plans extend only to the next year or two.

Abt is also under contract with the U.S. Department of Labor to analyze the impact of JTPA on the earnings, AFDC benefits, Food Stamp benefits, and high school attainment of adult women receiving AFDC when they applied to JTPA. The first phase of this national study occurred between 1986 and 1993 and found that welfare recipients were the group most helped by JTPA. In their current follow-up analysis, Abt is examining which groups of female AFDC recipients benefit the most from JTPA; which JTPA services have the greatest impact on earnings; how JTPA affects the types of jobs held by AFDC recipients; why JTPA appears to have no estimated effect on recipients’ receipt of AFDC and Food Stamp benefits; and why welfare recipients, particularly adult women, see a relatively large earnings increase as a result of JTPA. This follow-up report has not yet been completed.

For more information regarding Abt’s research testing state waivers, call Alan Werner at (617) 349-2832; for more information regarding Abt’s JTPA studies, call Erik Beecroft at (301) 913-0546. You can visit Abt’s website at http://www.abtassoc.com.
Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) and Coalition on Human Needs (CHN)

The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) is encouraging community-level monitoring of the impacts of the welfare law on the well-being of families and children. Through this information gathering effort, CDF hopes to gauge initial outcomes and focus public attention on the effects of the new welfare law on children and families. The purpose of the CDF Monitoring Project is to enable service providers and researchers to collect baseline information about the families and children they currently serve, which can later be compared to information regarding the status of children after the implementation of the PRWORA. CDF wants to monitor welfare policy changes affecting low-income families in different communities and urges service providers to monitor the following areas: changes in benefit receipt, employment, housing, utilities, medical care, hunger, increased demand for services, and family background characteristics.

To facilitate this information gathering, CDF is distributing a Client Survey packet developed in partnership with the Coalition on Human Needs (CHN). CHN has already begun to disseminate the survey through Catholic Charities USA, the Child Welfare League of America, and other national groups. This survey includes a two-page check-off form and optional open-ended questions designed to obtain welfare families’ detailed stories. Many groups plan to administer this survey quarterly, starting the third week of February 1997. For organizations that use this survey instrument and return their completed survey forms, CDF will compile the results and help groups compare their local findings with state and national findings. In addition, CDF plans to disseminate other survey instruments and develop additional surveys to cover issues such as domestic violence and immigration. CDF plans to release a sample survey covering domestic violence issues at the end of February.

For more information or to receive the Client Survey packet, call Christina Firvida at (202) 662-3556, Arloc Sherman at (202) 662-3537, or visit CDF’s website at http://www.childrensdefense.org.

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) &
the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) are planning an ongoing State Documentation Project to monitor, document, and analyze how states restructure their welfare policies, cash assistance programs for poor families, Food Stamps, and Medicaid. CLASP and CBPP will monitor and report on policy changes in all 50 states and will assess policy trends around the country. The policy issues their project will examine include: eligibility, benefits and services, employment-related activities linked to cash assistance, employment retention policies, other restrictions and conditions of eligibility and benefits (e.g. family caps, policies on legal immigrants), and administration. While the project is not intended to collect information about the impact of program design, proper assessment of information and claims about the program impacts will depend in part on the clear understanding of program structure and rules.
Through the State Documentation Project, CLASP and CBPP will collect comprehensive information on state policies using "reporters" at the state level (which will, in many cases, be legal services or legal advocacy organizations). The legislative and regulatory information collected by the "reporters" will be forwarded to CLASP and CBPP, who will analyze the materials, assess the accuracy of the reports, and obtain confirmation of the data and analysis from program administrators in each state. CLASP and CBPP intend to widely disseminate their findings on a continuous basis and establish a database to help with dissemination. They also plan to develop an electronic database to improve their capacity to provide timely and ongoing reporting on a state-by-state basis, and by program element.

In addition to this project, both CLASP and CBPP have produced several publications which summarize and analyze the welfare reform law (see below).

**CLASP Publications**
- "The CLASP Guide to Welfare Waivers: 1992-1995" $13.00 (CLASP is updating this guide to include summaries, by topic and by state, of all waivers requested up to the date of the PRWORA's enactment.)
- "A Brief Summary of Key Provisions of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant of H.R. 3734" by Mark Greenberg and Steve Savner. August 13, 1996. $4.00
- "Waivers and the New Welfare Law: Initial Approaches in State Plans" by Mark Greenberg and Steve Savner. November 11, 1996. $3.00
- "Family Law Issues and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996" by Paula Roberts. November 1996. $5.00

**CBPP Publications**
- "The Time Line for Implementing the New Welfare Law," by Jocelyn Guyer, Cindy Mann, and David A. Super. November 8, 1996. $4.00 plus $2.00 shipping & handling.
- "The New Welfare Law," by David A. Super, Sharon Parrott, Susan Steinmetz, and Cindy Mann. August 14, 1996. $8.00 plus $2.00 shipping & handling.
- CBPP also held a conference regarding the implementation of the new welfare law (November 15-16, 1996 in Washington, DC) and has several conference-related publications.

For more information on this welfare monitoring project, contact Steve Savner at CLASP at (202) 328-5140, CBPP at (202) 408-1080, or access their websites through http://www.epn.org. For publication requests, call CLASP or CBPP.

**Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.**

Mathematica Policy Research is an employee-owned company that conducts social policy research and data collection. Mathematica is in the process of creating a dynamic microsimulation model to project costs, caseloads, distribution impacts, employment, and other outcomes from state welfare plans. The model will build on the Simulation of Trends in Employment, Welfare, and Related Dynamics (STEWARD) model. The model's database will be prepared from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) data. This project is funded by The Smith Richardson Foundation and the Department of Agriculture's Food and
Consumer Service (FCS). Mathematica expects to be ready to distribute the model by the fall of 1997, and will disseminate it to interested states.

In a separate effort, Mathematica will provide technical assistance, once again in the form of a microsimulation model, to states requesting assistance from the Department of Agriculture’s FCS in order to develop a Simplified Food Stamp Program (SFSP). The purpose of this effort, which is funded by FCS and will run from 1997 through 1999, is to help states examine the probable effects of their proposed SFSPs on costs and recipients before states submit their plans to FCS for approval. The PRWORA permits states to operate SFSPs, but the state must demonstrate that the SFSP will not increase costs above what they would have been had the state followed the national Food Stamp Program (FSP) rules, as amended by the PRWORA. Mathematica, awarded a contract by FCS, will examine the cost neutrality of states’ SFSPs at no cost to the states.

Mathematica is also conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Labor on the cost-effectiveness of the Job Corps. Mathematica’s 1983 Job Corps study, based on a comparison of youths enrolled in the program to a similar group of youths not enrolled, estimated a 46 percent return on America’s investment in Job Corps. This return was based on reductions in welfare, health care, and crime costs as well as increases in the earnings of Job Corps graduates and the taxes paid on these earnings. In November 1994, Mathematica began data collection for a second study on the impact of Job Corps training, to be completed in 1999, with preliminary data available this year. As with the first study, this project randomly assigns Job Corps applicants into a program group (individuals who are enrolled) and a control group (not enrolled) and tracks these groups for four years. Mathematica’s investigation focuses on the cost-effectiveness of the program as well as the individual components of it.

For more information on any of these projects, contact Stuart Kerachsky at (609) 799-3535 or visit Mathematica’s website at http://www.mathematica-npr.com.

The Urban Institute

Assessing the New Federalism, currently one of the largest monitoring efforts, is a three to five year endeavor to document, analyze, and report on changes in the social safety net resulting from the decentralization of social programs in the United States. The Urban Institute’s project focuses on the design, administration, and funding of health care, income security, job training, and social service programs for low-income families. In addition, the Urban Institute, with collaboration from Child Trends, plans to monitor changes in the well-being of children and families as reflected by labor force participation, access to health care, teen fertility, family stability, and overall poverty rates. They will also attempt to measure potential causal links between changes in government programs and changes in these well-being indicators.
Some of the major features of the Urban Institute’s data collection efforts include:

- **State Database**: this database will contain state-specific information on demographic and economic trends, state and local fiscal trends, program policy changes and participation data, and social and economic outcome indicators. The welfare portion of this database will include data on changes in benefit levels, eligibility rules, time limits, and behavioral incentives. The primary source of this information will be federal government agencies and secondary sources such as the National Association of State Budget Officers and the National Conference of State Legislatures. Some data will be obtained by surveys conducted by Urban Institute staff or by organizations under subcontract. The database will be available at the Urban Institute’s website (http://www.urban.org) in April 1997.

- **National Survey of America’s Families**: The Urban Institute plans to survey approximately 1,900 families with children and 1,400 non-aged households without children in each of the 12 states that were chosen for the study. About two-thirds of whom have an income level below 200 percent of poverty. The survey, developed by researchers at the Urban Institute and Child Trends and conducted by Westat will collect information on demographics, economic status, health care access and utilization, experience with welfare, and indicators of family well-being. State-specific data will be collected for 12 states (AL, CA, FL, MA, MI, MN, MS, NJ, NY, TX, WA, WI); an additional sample will yield national estimates. The first survey round will occur in early 1997, and the second round is planned for the spring of 1999. These data will also eventually be available to the public via the Urban Institute’s website.

- **Intensive Case Study Reviews**: These reviews will focus on the development and implementation of policies, including welfare policies, in the 12 target states. The first round of case study reviews will be conducted from late 1996 through early 1997. The second round, to be conducted in the same locations, is planned for 1999.

The timeline for this project is:

- **Early 1997**: Policy briefs outlining national policy developments and trends in child and family well-being will be released.

- **April 1997**: The first set of data from the state database is expected to be available to the public; information will be placed on the internet.

- **April 1998**: Micro data records from the first round of household surveys should be available and will also be released in electronic form.

- **Mid 1999**: The Urban Institute will release analytical reports on trends over time at the national and state level and analysis of policy and outcome correlations.
• Early 2000: Results of the projected second round of the household survey will be released, allowing for the analysis of changes in family and child well-being within the states and the relationship between changes in well-being and policy changes.

The project’s findings will be disseminated to media; federal, state, and local officials; national associations; community groups; health and social service program administrators; researchers; and the public.

The project will focus on the impact of the New Federalism on programmatic changes and the resulting effects on the well-being of families. Among the issues that the project will focus are:

• State & Local Budgets: The Urban Institute plans to monitor the impact on total funding available for social programs, patterns in changes in state taxes, and evidence of a widening fiscal disparity among states as a consequence of devolution. The project will also look at evidence of a “race to the bottom,” with states competing to retain and attract middle-class households while avoiding an influx of other states’ welfare caseloads.

• State Priorities & Service Delivery: The project will monitor state policy changes and systematic variations among the states with regard to these changes. The project will also examine the quality of information available to local officials and groups for assessing approaches to welfare reform.

• Behavior & Well-being of Individuals and Families: The Urban Institute will monitor the behavior (e.g. out-of-wedlock births, work effort) and well-being of individuals and families in order to determine the impact of new policies on these indicators.

The project will also assess the consequences of New Federalism on programmatic changes in four broad areas: health care programs, income security programs, workforce development strategies, and other social programs.

The outcome indicators used in this project build on the indicators tested and analyzed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in its Kids Count project. The categories from which the indicators are taken include: health status, child and youth well-being, family well-being, and economic security.

This project is funded by a three year grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The project receives support from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, the McKnight Foundation, The Fund for New Jersey, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For more information, call the Urban Institute at (202) 857-8619 or visit their website at http://www.urban.org.
Welfare Information Network (WIN)

The Welfare Information Network (WIN) was created to help states and communities obtain the information, policy analysis, and technical assistance needed to develop and implement welfare reform programs that will reduce dependency and promote the well-being of children and families. To help achieve this goal, WIN is creating a database containing information on organizations, publications, websites, technical assistance services, state and local initiatives in selected program and management areas, and expert contacts. The tasks WIN plans to undertake include:

- Establishing and strengthening networks between technical assistance funders, technical assistance providers, research and evaluation institutions, and states and localities engaged in welfare reform.

- Acting as an information clearinghouse, gathering and disseminating studies and evaluations and organizational information.

- Improving the accessibility of information on legislation, demographics, and financial trends; of research and evaluation results; of technical assistance resources and providers.

- Identifying promising welfare reform models and the resources needed to support these programs, and bringing these initiatives to the attention of funders.

WIN is a special activity of The Finance Project, a national initiative to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public financing for education and other children’s services. WIN is expected to draw upon the resources of both The Finance Project and other organizations.

The concept of WIN was developed by the Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce (GIST) and is funded by Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Foundation for Child Development. For more information, call Barry Van Lare, Executive Director, at (202) 628-5790 or visit WIN’s website at http://www.welfareinfo.org.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) joined with the Corporation for Enterprise Development, the Ms. Foundation for Women, and the National Economic Development and Law Center to create the State Organizing Project for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency which provides resources and technical assistance to community-based activists and state legislatures on policies to improve low-income families’ chances for self-sufficiency. The project will link these four national organizations with local partners in order to strengthen the ability of state coalitions to gain state-level support for six strategies for economic self-sufficiency. One product of this project is the publication “Six Strategies for Self-Sufficiency,” which describes
the strategies and provides information on how to implement them. There is one chapter regarding each of the six strategies, providing background on the strategy, rationale for using this strategy, key elements of the strategy, state implementation options, and case studies describing organizations which have implemented the strategy. The six strategies are:

- **The Self-Sufficiency Standard:** This is an alternative to the federal poverty standard. Unlike the poverty standard, the self-sufficiency standard looks at costs of living as they vary by family type and geographic location and takes into account costs such as child care and transportation. This measure can be used to assess whether welfare employment training programs increase earnings sufficiently to get out of poverty.

- **Targeting High-Wage Jobs:** This involves investing public money in counseling, education, and training for higher wage employment.

- **Integrating Literacy with Employment Skills:** Higher wage jobs can be achieved by those with limited literacy through functional context education (which involves simultaneously teaching literacy and job skills).

- **Education and Training for Nontraditional Employment:** One higher wage option for female family heads is employment in jobs that are traditionally thought of as "men's jobs."

- **Microenterprise Development:** The Self Employment Investment Demonstration (SEID) is an example of a project that tested microenterprise as a self-sufficiency strategy.

- **Individual Development Accounts (IDAs):** These accounts improve low-income families' chances for long-term independence through asset building. The chapter on IDAs describes seven myths and realities about IDAs.

In addition to producing this publication, the *State Organizing Project for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency* intends, in order to achieve policy implementation of the six strategies, to provide funding and technical assistance to local activist groups and to provide legislative analyses of federal welfare and workforce development bills. Target states for this project include CA, DC, GA, IL, MN, MT, NC, OR, PA, and TX.

*Six Strategies for Self-Sufficiency* is available from WOW for $30.00. The State Organizing Project for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency is supported by the Ford Foundation, the Summit Fund, the Lake B. Hancock Foundation, and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation. For more information or to order the publication, call WOW at (202) 638-3143 or visit their website at http://www.w-o-w.org.

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These newsletters are part of a larger IWPR project entitled Coordinating Nationwide Research Efforts on Welfare Reform, which seeks to develop partnerships between researchers, service providers, advocates, and policy makers and to establish a coordinated research agenda on welfare reform on issues of particular importance to women. This project is funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Other Welfare Research Resources

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has released a report entitled Indicators of Welfare Dependence and Well-Being: Interim Report to Congress. This lengthy and comprehensive report can be obtained by calling the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Service Policy at ASPE, DHHS, at (202) 690-7409. A number of resources and technical assistance documents regarding TANF are also available on their web site as well as through their departmental office. For information on TANF requirements, please visit http://ASPE.OS.DHHS.gov. Other links to DHHS web sites can be found through the Welfare Information Network (WIN): http://www.welfareinfo.org. WIN also has links to web sites where you can access copies of the PRWORA. A paper copy of the PRWORA is also available through the Government Printing Office for $12.00. Please call (202) 512-1800.

The Board on Children, Youth, and Families (Institute of Medicine, National Research Council) convened a second annual research briefing, held in collaboration with the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (U.S. DHHS), on welfare and children’s development. A report from this briefing, entitled New Findings on Welfare and Children’s Development, was published in January 1997. For more information, call (202) 334-2998.

The Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research (Poverty Center) started to operate in the fall of 1996. The Poverty Center plans to operate a broad range of research projects, conferences, and dissemination activities that will extend beyond the perimeters of the college campuses. In order to promote research on poverty and policy, the Center will offer funds, provide research support, and engage in mentoring. The Center also publishes a newsletter, Poverty Research News. For more information, contact the Poverty Center by phone at (847) 491-4145 or by e-mail at povcen@nwu.edu.

IWPR’s Welfare Monitoring Listserv

As part of the project to coordinate welfare research, IWPR has set up a listserv (electronic bulletin board) which is devoted to the discussion of welfare reform. You can subscribe to the list by sending the following command to the listserv address, at listserv@american.edu:

SUBSCRIBE WELFAREML Full Name
(Use your full name, not your e-mail address. The listserv software can read your e-mail address automatically.) When you sign up you will receive a welcome message which will provide further instructions for the listserv. IWPR’s welfare reform newsletters will be disseminated through the listserv as well as by mail and stored in the archive files of the WELFAREML listserv. This listserv offers the opportunity to share with other interested, like-minded scholars your research and questions on welfare and welfare reform in individual states and at the national level. Discussion on other issues, such as domestic violence or health and other information such as calls for papers, conference information, fact sheets, and legislative updates are also welcome. For more information on the listserv, contact Jackie Chu at chu@www.iwpr.org.