

**Chapter 3—The Continuing Use of  
Assistance by Former Missouri  
AFDC Recipients**

**For The Missouri Department of Social Services  
Through the Local Investment Commission**

**MRI Project No. 1033-01**

**June 8, 2000**

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Assistance by Former Missouri  
AFDC Recipients**

**For The Missouri Department of Social Services  
Broadway State Office Building  
P. O. Box 1527  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102**

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# Preface

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Midwest Research Institute (MRI) is pleased to deliver this third report to the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), through the Local Investment Commission (LINC), on the continuing use of assistance by persons who left Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in the last quarter of 1996. The purpose of this study is to assess the movement of these families toward economic self-sufficiency two years after exit. This project is being performed under contract to LINC with funds provided by DSS and Grant 98ASPE300A from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

MRI wishes to thank staff members of DSS and LINC for providing the administrative data included in this report and for their input into the design of the questionnaire used in the survey. In particular, the assistance of Dr. Richard Koon, Dr. Tracy Dranginis, Mr. John Shively and Mr. Chris VanNess was invaluable. We also thank Ms. Sue Spraggs for her assistance with state administrative data. We are grateful to Julia Isaacs and Davy Norris of ASPE for their helpful comments on our first draft.

This project was performed under the direction of Dr. Nancy Dunton. Dr. Jane Mosley was the principal analyst on this chapter. Ms. Lola Butcher and Ms. Wanda Brandenburg also assisted on the project. Survey data for this study were collected under subcontract with ORC/Macro International. We deeply appreciate the dedication and insight of their staff, particularly Ms. Tammy Ouellette.

Any questions regarding this report should be directed to Dr. Dunton at (816) 753-7600, Ext. 1169.

MIDWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Nancy Dunton, Ph.D.  
Director  
Center for Health and Social Research

Approved:

William P. Duncan, Ph.D.  
Vice President  
Technical Operations

June 8, 2000

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# Executive Summary

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This report is the third in a series describing the current economic well-being of individuals who left Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Missouri in the fourth quarter of 1996. It focuses on receipt of government assistance, including use of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); Food Stamps; Medicaid; public housing; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and child care assistance.

The first report on this cohort showed that most former recipients had demonstrated a substantial work effort since leaving AFDC, while the second report noted that, despite their commitment to the labor force, the vast majority of former recipients remained poor or near poor.<sup>1</sup> This report demonstrates continued high levels of use of assistance after leaving welfare. Many individuals (50%) had returned to TANF for at least one month in the two and one-half years since exiting AFDC in the fourth quarter of 1996. More than four-fifths had used Food Stamps at some point since leaving, although at the time of the survey many eligible families were not participating in this program.

For almost all forms of assistance, rates of receipt were higher in outstate areas than in St. Louis and Kansas City. Additionally, those identified as intermittent workers in earlier chapters were more likely to rely on government benefits than were other leavers.

For many measures of assistance, we have information on whether a benefit was received since exiting, as well as whether it was being received at the time of the survey. Whenever data permits, we provide information for each time period. Additionally, to the extent that it is possible, we provide information on eligibility and need for various services as well as receipt.

## TANF

As noted, half the sample had returned to welfare at some point since leaving. Rates of return were higher for outstate leavers (52%) when compared to Kansas City (46%) and St. Louis (47%). Intermittent workers were more likely to have received TANF than those who were working when surveyed or those who had never been employed since exiting welfare. This finding is consistent with findings reported in previous chapters, namely, that intermittent workers were more economically vulnerable than other groups.

Although rates of TANF use over the two and one-half years since exit were extremely high, at the time of the survey approximately 14 percent of the sample were receiving TANF benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Near poverty is defined as 185 percent of the poverty line.

## Food Stamps

Food Stamps are often received by individuals as they transition off welfare, so high rates of receipt since leaving were to be expected. When surveyed, just under half of the sample (47%) had received Food Stamps in the last month. Rates of receipt were highest in outstate areas. Based on rough eligibility guidelines, we found that only 60 percent of eligible households received Food Stamps at the time of the survey. Eligible families that did not use this resource were much less likely to have received TANF or Medicaid in the last month. It could be the case that use of other services serves as a gateway to the Food Stamp system, providing referrals and eligibility information. It could also be that many individuals are simply reluctant to use government assistance in the era of “ending welfare.”

## Medicaid

At the time of the survey, approximately two-thirds of households contained a member covered by Medicaid. It was far more common for that member to be a child than an adult. Again, rates of coverage varied by region, with those outside of St. Louis and Kansas City being more likely to receive this benefit. However, it is difficult to know how to interpret Medicaid coverage without examining lack of health insurance as well. Even though more than 60 percent of households had individuals with Medicaid coverage, many also had uninsured individuals. Roughly 10 percent of households contained a child without any health coverage, while 40 percent included an uninsured adult.

## Child Care

Although child care assistance is a major form of transitional assistance available to individuals leaving AFDC/TANF, there was a rather low take-up rate for state child care subsidies. Some may view this as surprising, given that there is no child care waiting list in Missouri, but this finding is consistent with studies in other states (Isaacs 1999). Overall, only 37 percent of leavers had ever used state child care subsidies. This could, of course, result from individuals not qualifying for assistance. Yet, looking only at individuals who met the eligibility criteria, the rate of receipt increased only slightly (42%).<sup>2</sup> Another explanation is that respondents simply did not have a need for such assistance, although given the high prevalence of child care problems, this seems less likely.

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<sup>2</sup> We defined eligibility for child care as having an income level below 130 percent of the poverty line and being employed at the time of the survey. Given Missouri’s need criteria, our definition is probably overly conservative.

## **Other Assistance**

Through our survey we also examined use of WIC and public housing.<sup>3</sup> When surveyed, nearly a quarter of respondents reported receiving each of these types of support.

## **Multiple Sources of Assistance**

Many services are, in fact, supposed to be used during a transition off welfare, so high rates of receipt might be anticipated. Perhaps many leavers relied on such assistance in the months soon after exit. Two and one half years after exit, however, one might have expected the use of many of these resources to have declined. Overall, 75 percent of former AFDC recipients were receiving at least one benefit at the time of the survey. Almost 35 percent were using three or more. For leavers receiving only one type of assistance, the most common was Medicaid (63%), followed by Food Stamps (13%).

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<sup>3</sup> Public housing includes both public housing as well as Section 8.

# Section 1.

## Introduction and Background

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The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) brought about an unprecedented change in the system of governmental supports for needy families. PRWORA ended the entitlement of needy families with children to cash assistance and, under general guidelines, gave each state the responsibility for developing its own programs. The goals of welfare reform were to help former welfare recipients move toward economic self-sufficiency and to reduce dependency on governmental assistance. The two hallmarks of this reform were a lifetime limit on the number of months of assistance and a work requirement. PRWORA also de-emphasized the role of training in cash assistance programs and moved the programmatic emphasis to “work first.” As with any major change in a social institution, there are legitimate concerns about whether the effects of the change will match the intention of the reform. Thus, it is critical to assess how individuals are faring under the new system.

Missouri’s TANF program, called “Temporary Assistance,” is designed to provide assistance to needy families with children so they can be cared for in their own home and to reduce dependency by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage. Major provisions include:

- Able-bodied adult cash assistance recipients must work or be in work activities (job training, subsidized employment, job search, or job readiness assistance, etc.) after two years of receiving assistance. This provision is subject to good cause exemptions on a limited basis.
- Receipt of cash assistance under Temporary Assistance is restricted to a lifetime limit of five years.
- As of fiscal year 2000, individuals receiving cash assistance (unless exempt) must work at least 30 hours per week (averaged over a month) to be counted toward meeting the work participation rate.

This study assesses the well-being of persons in Missouri who left Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in the fourth quarter of 1996. The well-being of this cohort is being examined approximately two years after exit from cash assistance. This design is primarily descriptive and does not attempt to attribute cohort differences to PRWORA changes. Observed difference also could be related to changes in the labor market, inflation, maturation, or other factors.

The sampling design for this study allows a comparison of three distinct geographic areas that are important for policy making in Missouri. These are:

- Kansas City area, defined as Jackson, Clay and Platte counties
- St. Louis area, defined as St. Louis County and St. Louis City
- Rest of state, including all other counties in the state

Missouri is home to nearly 5.5 million residents. The Kansas City and St. Louis areas are the state's two largest metropolitan areas. They account for one-sixth and one-quarter of the state's population, respectively (Table 1). In 1999, when the survey was conducted, unemployment rates were low. The unemployment rate in St. Louis (3.6%) was slightly higher than the state average, while Kansas City's rate (3.2%) was lower than the state average. The Kansas City area contained 18 percent of the AFDC caseload in 1999, proportional to its share of the total population. On the other hand, the St. Louis area contained 42 percent of the caseload, nearly double its proportional share. Similarly, the AFDC caseload declined by 42 percent between 1994 and 1999 in Kansas City, a figure close to the statewide average (43%), while the caseload decline was much less in St. Louis (32%).

**Table 1. Comparison of Geographic Areas**

	Kansas City area	St. Louis area	Rest of state	Missouri total/average
1999 Population*	906,283	1,330,141	3,231,914	5,468,338
Population distribution	17%	24%	59%	100%
1999 Unemployment rate**	3.2%	3.6%	3.3%	3.4%
1999 AFDC caseload***	9,730	21,943	21,150	52,823
Caseload distribution	18%	42%	40%	51%
AFDC caseload decline, 1994-1999***	42%	32%	51%	43%

\* U.S. Census population estimates.

\*\* Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

\*\*\* Missouri Department of Social Services.

Assessing the well-being of former cash assistance recipients is a difficult task because there is no ready way to locate many of them. In order to maximize the amount of information available on the transitions of former recipients toward self-sufficiency, two approaches were used. The first was to search for former recipients in state administrative records to determine, for example, if they were receiving any kind of social services, if they had wages reported through the Missouri Department of Labor, or if they were in the care or custody of the state. The second approach was to conduct a survey of a sample of former recipients, collecting exactly the needed information. The survey was designed to examine how persons fared after leaving the welfare system in terms of workforce attachment, income, household composition, and other factors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A report examining only administrative data for the State of Missouri has already been released (Ryan and Koon, 1999). Thus, our results are based primarily on survey data, although we used administrative data to augment that information.

This report is based on the survey results for those who left AFDC in 1996. Because of the richness of the survey data, it would be nearly impossible to convey all the relevant information in one report; thus, MRI is issuing a series of “chapters” dealing with key outcomes. This report, the third in the series, focuses on use of government assistance. It describes rates of receipt for several key programs at any point since exit as well as when surveyed. Later chapters will report on:

- Barriers and incentives to work (such as child care use) and health insurance coverage
- A detailed methodology, describing survey procedures and assessments of reliability
- A cross-chapter summary of findings

These reports will be issued throughout the first half of 2000. We will also be issuing companion reports on a cohort who left Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in the fourth quarter of 1997. These reports will be issued during the second half of 2000.

## Section 2. Methodological Overview

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This report describes findings from the first of two surveys of former Missouri cash assistance recipients, specifically, individuals who left AFDC in the fourth quarter of 1996. The sampling frame, obtained from the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), included 12,508 adults who left the AFDC rolls during the fourth quarter of 1996. Recipients were counted as “leaving” the rolls if they remained off the caseload for at least two consecutive months. Persons who subsequently returned to welfare were included in the survey.<sup>2</sup> There was no minimum time that a former recipient had to have been on the rolls to be included in the survey. Child-only cases were excluded.

Approximately 10 percent of the former recipients, or 1,200 individuals, were selected into the sample. The following three sub-areas of the state each had 400 sample members:

- St. Louis City and St. Louis County
- Kansas City area (Jackson, Clay, and Platte counties)
- Rest of Missouri

Interviews were conducted over a 26-week period between March 15 and August 31, 1999, approximately two and one-half years after individuals left welfare. Interviews were completed with 878 respondents, for a response rate of 74.5 percent.<sup>3</sup> Response rates were comparable in the three geographic study regions: Kansas City area (73%), St. Louis area (72%), and rest of state (77%). Refusal rates were also comparable across regions: Kansas City area (1.6%), St. Louis area (1.8%), and rest of state (0.7%). Based on comparisons with administrative data, we found little indication of nonresponse bias (Table 2). Comparing the regional distribution of respondents and nonrespondents, we see a modest over-representation of leavers from the rest of the state. Length of AFDC use prior to exit was essentially equal between respondents and nonrespondents.

**Table 2. Assessment of Response Bias from Administrative Records**

	Respondents (%)	Nonrespondents (%)
Regional distribution		
Kansas City area	36	40
St. Louis City/County	32	36
Rest of state	32	23
Months of AFDC use prior to exit	28 months	27 months
Racial distribution		
Black	52	53
White	46	42

<sup>2</sup> According to the survey, roughly one-third of the sample had returned to TANF after exiting in the fourth quarter of 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Former recipients who were deceased, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to be interviewed were excluded in the calculation of the response rate.

MRI subcontracted with ORC/Macro International, Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, to administer the survey. To assist in locating respondents, DSS provided information on the leavers' Social Security numbers, counties of residence, last known addresses, and, if available, telephone numbers. Interviews were conducted primarily during weekday evenings and weekends, lasting on average 38 minutes.

The questionnaire for this survey collected information about respondents' lives two years after they had left the AFDC program. It included 151 items covering 10 topical areas:

- Work effort
- Earnings and other income
- Welfare reciprocity status
- Use of supports, including Food Stamps, emergency assistance, and WIC
- Training
- Education
- Health insurance coverage
- Childcare
- Housing and residential mobility
- Household composition

Among these topical areas, income traditionally is the most difficult concept to measure comprehensively and reliably. Respondents, particularly former AFDC recipients, may be reluctant to talk about income to a stranger and may refuse to answer. Some may give false answers, while others forget small or infrequent sources of income. To address these concerns, we followed Census Bureau practice by asking respondents to report income from each of nine types of sources for each person in the household over the age of 16 who lived in the household more than half of the previous month.<sup>4</sup> Respondents were asked if they (or other household members) received income from a source in the last calendar month; if yes, how much; and if they were unsure, where it fell within a set of ranges. Asking about the last calendar month reduced recall problems. Asking for each source prompted memory of small or infrequent sources. Using this procedure, we experienced a relatively good response to the income questions. Item nonresponse was low. Of the 21 income questions, nonresponse ranged from 0 to 6.5 percent. As might be expected, respondents had more difficulty reporting income for others in the household than for themselves. Outliers, which could represent false answers, also were rare. Overall, 20 respondents were removed from the analysis because, although they acknowledged receipt of one or more income sources, they refused to give an amount.

Analyses presented in this report were conducted for the State of Missouri. They represent St. Louis City and County, the Kansas City area (Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties), and the rest of Missouri. The descriptive statistics presented in this report are based on data that were weighted to represent the entire leaver cohort. Figures reflecting sample sizes are unweighted.

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<sup>4</sup> Income sources included: earnings; child support; TANF; Supplemental Security Income; unemployment benefits; Worker's Compensation; Veteran's Administration payments, Social Security, or Survivor's benefits; regular financial support from friends or family; and other income sources.

## Section 3. Findings

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As the AFDC/TANF caseloads have declined dramatically over the last several years, interest in what happens to individuals after they leave welfare has increased. Much of that interest has centered around how well former welfare recipients are transitioning to self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is comprised of at least three parts—employment, income, and use of government assistance. Chapters 1 and 2 in this series focused on the employment and income of former Missouri welfare recipients. This chapter describes the third and final component of self-sufficiency: reliance on government assistance. Specifically, this chapter provides information on TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), Food Stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance, child care assistance, and WIC (Supplemental Security Income for Women, Infants, and Children).

There are difficulties, however, in comparing receipt of different types of assistance. Data used in this report were drawn from two different sources: state administrative records and survey information.<sup>5</sup> Both across, as well as within data sources, the same time referent was not always used. Table 3 illustrates some of the complexities. In the survey, WIC and public housing reflected benefits received at the time of the survey, while Food Stamps receipt information was collected for the previous calendar month.<sup>6</sup> Information about TANF receipt was collected for both the previous calendar month as well as the day of the interview.

**Table 3. Time Periods and Data Sources for Variables Measuring Government Assistance**

Type of assistance	Currently receiving	Received in prior calendar month	Ever received <sup>a</sup>
TANF	S <sup>b</sup>	S/A <sup>c</sup>	A/S
Food Stamps		S/A	A
Medicaid	S	A	A
WIC	S		
Child care subsidy		A	A
Public housing	S		

<sup>a</sup> “Ever” in administrative records refers to the time period from January 1, 1997 to September 31, 1999, or a span of 33 months. “Ever” from survey data refers to the time from exiting welfare to the date of the survey.

<sup>b</sup> S = Information collected from survey.

<sup>c</sup> A = Information collected from administrative records.

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<sup>5</sup> Administrative records refers to administrative records for survey respondents only.

<sup>6</sup> If a family was interviewed on March 15, 1999, the time referent for WIC or public housing would be that day (March 15, 1999), while the time period for Food Stamp use would be February 1999. This occurred because of an inconsistency in question wording.

Eligibility for programs is assessed based on income in the previous calendar month. Thus, it is difficult to determine eligibility for various programs at the time of the survey unless one assumes that income is constant over that one month period. Nevertheless, even with these caveats, it is critical to create as full a picture as possible of what programs former AFDC recipients were using when surveyed and have used over time.

### 3.1 TANF

Self-sufficiency is often viewed as a continuum, with some individuals being more self-sufficient than others. While there may be debate over the definition of levels along this continuum, most agree that receipt of TANF contradicts any definition of self-sufficiency (Sandfort and Hill 1996). There are various ways to measure TANF receipt—through respondent self-reports, administrative records, or a combination of both. Regardless of the data source used, returns to TANF were common (Table 4). Using survey data, more than 30 percent of respondents had returned to TANF at some point in the two and one-half years since exiting in the fourth quarter of 1996. Included in this 30 percent was a small number of individuals who received TANF in a state besides Missouri.<sup>7</sup> Using administrative records, the percent returning to TANF was substantially higher (44%).

**Table 4. Percent Returning to AFDC or TANF since Exiting AFDC by Region<sup>a</sup>  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Survey records	31	34	34	28
Administrative records	44	41	43	44
Either source	50	46	47	52
N=	877	318	283	276

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

<sup>a</sup> Region refers to location at the time of exit (4th quarter of 1996), not at the time of the survey.

It is important to use both sources of information because each captures something the other may miss. For example, only survey data will pick up use of cash assistance in other states or use by other household members. On the other hand, respondents may be reluctant to admit returning to TANF; thus survey results alone may underrepresent use. In fact, based on our results, survey data did indeed undercount returns to TANF.<sup>8</sup> Using

<sup>7</sup> Approximately 1 percent of the sample reported receiving TANF from another state at the time of the survey (n=12).

<sup>8</sup> This finding is consistent with underreporting of welfare receipt in national survey data such as in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Current Population Survey (CPS).

either source of data, half of all leavers had returned to AFDC or TANF since exiting in the fourth quarter of 1996.

This figure is higher than those reported in other state studies. For example, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Ohio reported return rates in the range of 28 to 35 percent. The time period examined after exit is longer in the Missouri study than in others. In the aforementioned studies, rates of return were generally examined for one year after exit, while the current survey collected two and one-half years of data. Using administrative data only, Missouri's rate of return to TANF after one year for this cohort was approximately 26 percent. Thus, the higher rates of return to TANF between Missouri and other states are clearly a result of different time referents.

Table 4 displays interesting regional differences in returns to AFDC and TANF. Examining survey data only, individuals outside of Kansas City and St. Louis reported the lowest rates of return to TANF. In administrative data that pattern is reversed, although the difference is less pronounced. Using both information sources, the highest rates of return were found in areas outside of Kansas City and St. Louis. Additionally, the discrepancy between the data sources was almost double for respondents in those areas. These differences from one region to another may be due to differing regional attitudes toward acknowledging use of assistance. Previous research has found greater levels of stigma attached to welfare use in rural areas than in urban areas (Rank and Hirschl 1993). Thus, respondents from outstate areas may be more reluctant to admit receipt of TANF than residents of more metropolitan areas. Moreover, earlier reports on this sample clearly showed lower rates of income and earnings for leavers in outstate areas; thus, levels of need or deprivation in such areas may be quite different.<sup>9</sup>

Table 5 describes the discrepancy between survey and administrative records. Overall, almost 80 percent of the sample had agreement between the two data sources. Some respondents who did not appear in administrative records as returns did state in the survey that they had returned to the program. A larger problem, however, lay in survey respondents underreporting that they had returned to TANF.

**Table 5. Comparison of Survey and Administrative Records for TANF Return Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

Returned to TANF according to administrative records	Reported returning to TANF in the survey	
	Yes	No
Yes	234	124
No	48	462

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

<sup>9</sup> See "Employment and Earnings of Former Missouri AFDC Recipients" and "Income and Poverty of Former Missouri AFDC Recipients."

Overall, large differences in returns to TANF existed by work status (Table 6). Consistent with findings on earnings and household income, intermittent workers had the highest rates of return to TANF (69%).<sup>10</sup> Fifty-five percent of those who had never worked also returned to TANF. Nevertheless, regardless of which pattern of work characterized leavers, all groups had high rates of receipt. More than 40 percent of leavers who were working when surveyed had used TANF in the last 2½ years.

**Table 6. Percent Returning to AFDC or TANF since Exiting AFDC by Work Status Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Currently working (%)	Formerly working (%)	Never worked (%)
Survey data	31	23	46	40
Administrative data	44	35	67	38
Either source	50	41	69	55
N=	877	533	251	93

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

Although rates of return over time are an important aspect of self-sufficiency, it is also informative to examine use of TANF at the time of the survey. Table 7 displays the percent of the sample who stated they were receiving TANF benefits when interviewed. Overall, 14 percent of the sample was receiving TANF when surveyed.<sup>11</sup> Although the lowest rates for receipt were reported for outstate regions, the difference by region was minimal.

**Table 7. Percent Receiving TANF at the Time of the Survey by Region Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide	Kansas City	St. Louis	Rest of State
Percent receiving TANF	14	15	17	13

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

While there were essentially no regional differences in TANF receipt at the time of the survey, there were large differences by work history (Table 8). Not surprisingly, those leavers working at the time of the survey had by far the lowest rates of TANF receipt. In fact, only 4 percent of this group said they were receiving TANF at the time of the survey, either from Missouri or another state. The rates for intermittent workers and non-workers were the same; one-third of each group reported receipt of TANF at the time of the survey.

<sup>10</sup> Intermittent workers are defined as those who have worked since exit, but who were not working when surveyed. In the tables they are described as “formerly working.”

<sup>11</sup> Given the discrepancy between survey reports and administrative records displayed in Table 2, using survey reports alone may underreport TANF use.

Thus, intermittent workers were more likely to have returned to TANF since exit, but no more likely to be on TANF when surveyed than were non-workers.

**Table 8. Percent Receiving TANF at the Time of the Survey by Work History  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide	Currently working	Formerly worked	Never worked
Percent receiving TANF	14	4	33	33

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

There are several differences between respondents who stayed off cash assistance and those who returned (Table 9). Those receiving TANF when surveyed had lower levels of education and a smaller number of potential workers in the household, in part because they were less likely to be living with a spouse or partner. Interestingly, age for the two groups was essentially the same.

**Table 9. Factors Associated with TANF Receipt  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

Variable	TANF receipt at survey		TANF receipt since exit	
	Survey data only		Survey and administrative data	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Low education <sup>a</sup>	54%	29%	41%	24%
Household size	4.1	3.7	3.7	3.7
Household income (median)	\$484	\$1200	\$817	\$1350
Presence of spouse/partner	15%	35%	24%	40%
Number of adults	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.9
Number of workers (besides the leaver)	0.24	0.44	0.29	0.54
Number in household under 18	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.9
Age of leaver	32	33	31	35
N=	291	586	415	462

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

<sup>a</sup> Low education is defined as lacking a high school degree or GED.

As shown earlier, half of all leavers did not return to TANF. Factors that differentiated those leavers from other respondents included higher education and more adults in the household (and thus more potential workers). A large age difference also existed: those who had not returned to TANF since exit were substantially older. This could be because older workers were able to earn higher incomes; also, some leavers' children may have aged out of the program, and thus returning to TANF was not an option.

## 3.2 Food Stamps

As noted earlier, self-sufficiency is best viewed as a continuum. Receipt of cash benefits, such as AFDC/TANF would likely be on the far end of the continuum. Receipt of non-cash benefits would be closer to the center. We next turn to one non-cash benefit that was frequently received, Food Stamps.

As with TANF, we assessed receipt of Food Stamps for two different time periods—any time since leaving and in the last calendar month.<sup>12</sup> The data source for the first measure comes from administrative records, while the second measure comes from survey data. We examine use of Food Stamps using information from both administrative and survey data.

Overall, a large majority of the sample has used Food Stamps. Statewide, more than four-fifths of the sample (83%) used Food Stamps at some point since leaving AFDC (Table 10). Looking at both data sources together changed the ever numbers only slightly. Though these figures are slightly higher than those reported by other leaver studies, the study time period is also longer than most.<sup>13</sup>

For example, using only administrative data, Arizona reported 67 percent of leavers as having used Food Stamps in the 12 months following exit; Wisconsin reported 63 percent. On the other end of the spectrum, San Mateo County, California, found fewer than 30 percent of leavers using Food Stamps in the year after exit.

**Table 10. Food Stamp Receipt by Region  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
In last month (survey)	47	39	45	51
Any time since exit (administrative)	80	79	78	81
Either source	83	83	80	84
N=	877	318	283	276

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

Almost half (47%) of leavers received food stamp benefits in the prior calendar month. Examining receipt in the last calendar month, the highest reported rates were for those in outstate Missouri, while Kansas Citians reported the lowest rates of receipt. These regional differences mirror income trends reported in Chapter 2: Kansas Citians had the highest incomes, followed by St. Louis and those in the rest of the state. Thus, variations

<sup>12</sup> We have administrative records on Food Stamp receipt for the years 1997 and 1998, but we lack data for 1999. Thus, “any time since exit” refers to a two year period for Food Stamps as opposed to a two and one-half year period for TANF.

<sup>13</sup> Examining the time period for a year after exit only, approximately 75 percent of leavers had used Food Stamps at some point, a figure still higher than the numbers reported by other states.

in receipt may simply be a function of different levels of need or a larger eligible population.

Table 11 displays Food Stamp receipt by work history. Regardless of the leaver's work status, rates of receipt were high. As was the case with TANF, intermittent workers had the highest rates of receipt.

**Table 11. Food Stamp Receipt by Work History  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Currently working (%)	Formerly worked (%)	Never worked (%)
In last month (survey)	47	39	68	52
Any time since exit (administrative)	81	76	93	80
N=	877	533	251	93

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files.

Although we cannot assess "need" for Food Stamps using these data, we can create a rough proxy for eligibility.<sup>14</sup> We used the federal guidelines of 130 percent of the poverty line to determine whether households should be eligible based on the income reported in the survey. The result is shown in Table 12.

**Table 12. Use of Food Stamps in Previous Calendar Month for  
Households Living Below 130 percent of the Poverty Line  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Used Food Stamps in last month (survey)	60	50	56	63
N=	665	228	223	214

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

Two points should be noted regarding Table 12. Regardless of region, only 60 percent of leavers who are presumably eligible for Food Stamps reported receiving this benefit when surveyed. Recall, however, that a higher percentage of leavers in Missouri were using Food Stamps than were leavers in other states. Additionally, this take-up rate is consistent with national figures. In 1997 (the most recent year national figures are available), 63 percent of eligible individuals received Food Stamps.

<sup>14</sup> We cannot determine need because receipt of food stamps and food insecurity are inextricably linked. Those receiving food stamps may have a lower level of food insecurity because they receive benefits.

Second, the regional difference in receipt persists when examining only income-eligible families. Thus, differences in eligibility are not driving the different geographic rates of receipt.

Because of the concern over low Food Stamp take-up rates, we described more fully those individuals who did not receive Food Stamps in the last month, but whose income was below 130 percent of the poverty line. The relevant comparison group is made up of individuals who also have incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line but who did receive Food Stamps in the last month. Results are displayed in Table 13.

**Table 13. Characteristics of Families by Food Stamp Receipt for Households Under 130 percent of the Poverty Line**

	Received food stamps in last month	
	No (%)	Yes (%)
Unable to buy enough food in last month	37	25
Had a child skip meals in last month	6	2
Unable to pay rent, mortgage or utilities	23	35
Received TANF at time of survey	5	26
Household included Medicaid recipient	53	90
Own home	26	12
<b>Work history</b>		
Currently working	65	50
Formerly worked	23	38
Never worked	12	12
Lived with spouse or partner	32	20
Household size	3.6	3.8
Median household income	\$1060	\$630
N=	294	371

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

Although 40 percent of eligible households did not receive Food Stamps, it was not for lack of need. More than one-third (37%) of these households responded that there had been a time in the last month when they were unable to buy enough food for their needs. Six percent noted that children had skipped meals in the last month because of lack of food. Although these rates were lower for households that received Food Stamps, we could not tell if need was truly lower. It could be that levels of food insecurity are lower for the second group precisely *because* they received Food Stamps.

Even though both groups had relatively low incomes, eligible households that did not receive Food Stamps were better off financially than households that did. Median income was 40 percent higher and they were more likely to own their own home. Some of these differences may be due to larger numbers living with a spouse or partner, which is strongly associated with income level.

The large income difference between the two groups suggests that the “neediest” of welfare leavers are applying for and receiving Food Stamps. Additionally, it could be the case that those individuals whose incomes are closer to the eligibility cutoff do not go to

the trouble of applying, particularly if income fluctuations often cause them to be ineligible.

Households that did receive Food Stamps had much higher levels of interaction with other forms of assistance. Almost one-quarter were receiving TANF benefits when surveyed, and 90 percent had someone in the household receiving Medicaid. Only 4 percent of income-eligible families who lacked Food Stamps received TANF. Part of this difference could stem from differing income levels; that is, families who received Food Stamps had relatively low incomes, and more of them may have been eligible for TANF. However, it seems that receipt of other services also serves as a gateway to the Food Stamp system; individuals with such access may then be provided with important referral and eligibility information<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, that relationship could merely reflect a higher level of need for some households.

### 3.3 Medicaid/Health Insurance

One of the most common forms of assistance received by welfare leavers was Medicaid. The survey provided snapshot information on Medicaid use, that is, coverage at the time of the survey (Table 14). Children were much more likely to be covered by this program than were adults, and the difference was striking. Sixty five percent of households reported having at least one member who was covered by Medicaid in the last month. Thirty eight percent of households included an adult covered by Medicaid; 65 percent had at least one child covered.<sup>16</sup> As was the case with both TANF and Food Stamps, leavers from nonmetropolitan areas of the state were more likely to have Medicaid coverage than leavers from Kansas City or St. Louis. In nonmetropolitan areas, over 40 percent of leaver households contained an adult with Medicaid; 68 percent included a child receiving this benefit.

**Table 14. Percent of Households with Medicaid Coverage  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
At least one person covered by Medicaid	65	59	61	68
At least one adult covered by Medicaid	38	34	32	41
At least one child covered by Medicaid <sup>a</sup>	65	58	61	68
N=	877	318	283	277

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

<sup>a</sup> Only households that contain a child younger than 18 are included in these percentages.

<sup>15</sup> Recall, however, that more than 80 percent of households have received Food Stamps since exiting AFDC. This implies that lack of knowledge of the program may not be an issue. However, individuals who are aware of the program may still be mistaken about their own eligibility for such benefits.

<sup>16</sup> The survey did not distinguish between Medicaid and CHIP programs.

Relative to the few other states where data was available, rates of Medicaid receipt by Missouri AFDC leavers fell somewhere in the middle, although precise comparisons are difficult. When examining use one year after exit, the percent of leavers receiving Medicaid varied from 24 percent in San Mateo County to 63 percent in Wisconsin. For children, the numbers in all states hovered around 35 percent, much lower than the rates of coverage in Missouri.<sup>17</sup> Of course, the longer time period examined in Missouri may account for some of the difference between states.

It is impossible to understand what the Medicaid numbers mean without describing insurance coverage overall. Many individuals may have private insurance or other types of coverage; thus, by itself, the number covered by Medicaid tells us little. The real concern is with those individuals, particularly children, who lack any kind of health insurance, be it private or public. Table 15 displays the percent of households with uninsured individuals.

**Table 15. Health Care Coverage at the Time of the Survey by Region  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide	Kansas City	St. Louis	Rest of state
Percent of households containing uninsured children <sup>a</sup>	11	13	12	10
Percent of households containing uninsured adults	41	42	39	41
N=	877	318	283	277

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

<sup>a</sup> Only households that contain a child younger than 18 are included in these percentages.

Overall, 41 percent of households contained at least one adult who lacked any type of health coverage (Table 17). Rates of coverage for adults did not vary appreciably by geographic area. A much smaller number of households (11%) included a child who lacked any health coverage. Yet even this level is somewhat surprising given the massive expansion of CHIP programs. Presumably, all children in the sample would be eligible for such programs.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Only 3 states (or counties) reported rates for children in the 4th quarter after exit: Missouri, New York, and San Mateo County. These reported numbers were all based on administrative records only.

<sup>18</sup> In Missouri, the income ceiling to receive MC Plus is 300 percent of the poverty line, although copayments and premium amounts can be substantial at incomes in the upper end of the eligibility range.

Table 16 shows the percent of households without health coverage by work history. Work status made virtually no difference for children’s insurance coverage, but a large difference for adults. More than 40 percent of households where the leaver was working or had worked lacked health insurance for at least one adult, very similar to the overall average. The lowest rates of uninsurance for adults were found in households where the leaver had never worked.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 16. Health Care Coverage at the Time of the Survey by Work Patterns  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Currently working (%)	Formerly worked (%)	Never worked (%)
Households containing uninsured children	10	9	11	10
Households containing uninsured adults	40	41	41	29
N=877		533	251	93

Source: Missouri Leavers’ Survey.

Comparing the characteristics of households with and without uninsured members, surprisingly few differences were seen (Table 17). Those households with uninsured adults contained slightly more adults, and thus more workers, than other households. Additionally, such households were more likely to contain a spouse or partner.

**Table 17. Household Characteristics by Insurance Status  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Uninsured adult in household		Uninsured child in household	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Low education <sup>a</sup>	33%	33%	35%	33%
Household size	3.8	3.7	4	3.7
Household income (median)	\$1100	\$1134	\$1272	\$1100
Number of adults	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.6
Number of workers (besides the leaver)	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.4
Number under 18	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.1
Age of leaver	34	33	35	32
Percent with spouse/partner	38%	28%	32%	32%
N=	362	516	93	734

Source: Missouri Leavers’ Survey.

<sup>a</sup> Low education is defined as lacking a high school degree or GED.

<sup>19</sup> In a subsequent chapter, we describe health care coverage from all sources in more detail. It is informative to note, however, that more than 55 percent of non-workers were covered by Medicaid.

Households containing an uninsured child had higher incomes than households where all children were covered by insurance. They also had slightly more adults and were older than in insured households.

### 3.4 Public Housing

Another form of assistance that families may receive is housing assistance.<sup>20</sup> The survey asked about two types of housing assistance: public housing and Section 8.<sup>21</sup> A high amount (26%) of the sample was receiving one of these two types of housing assistance at the time of the survey (Table 18). Section 8 was more common in nonmetropolitan areas and public housing more prevalent in urban areas, but the differences were small.

**Table 18. Housing Assistance by Region  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Receiving Section 8 in last month	12	10	10	13
Using public housing in last month	15	16	15	14
Using either type of assistance	26	27	25	26
N=	875	316	282	277

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

There were few differences in Section 8 receipt by work history, although the highest rates were found for intermittent workers (Table 19). Public housing was also more commonly used by intermittent workers.

<sup>20</sup> All information regarding public housing comes from survey data only.

<sup>21</sup> Public housing is low-income housing that is actually operated by the local housing authority. Section 8 is subsidized housing, where the government provides subsidies directly to the owner, who then applies those subsidies to the rents he/she charges low-income tenants.

**Table 19. Housing Assistance by Work History  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Currently working (%)	Intermittent work (%)	Never worked (%)
Receiving Section 8 in last month	12	11	13	10
Using public housing in last month	14	13	19	11
Receiving either type of assistance	26	24	32	21
N=	875	531	250	94

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

There were several differences between leavers who were and were not receiving housing assistance when surveyed (Table 20). Income was the most striking difference. Of course, this is partly because assistance is available only to the income-eligible. Those receiving housing assistance lived in households with fewer adults, particularly fewer spouses or partners. They were also more likely to have received TANF in the last month, as would be expected based on the different income levels. However, it may also have to do with who receives priority for housing assistance. The survey did not ask about waiting lists for housing, so we cannot determine the number of households that desired such assistance but were unable to receive it. Interestingly, education level was remarkably similar across the groups.

**Table 20. Characteristics by Receipt of Housing Assistance  
Survey Data Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Received housing assistance when surveyed	
	Yes	No
Low education <sup>a</sup>	35%	32%
Household size	3.4	3.9
Household income (median)	\$650	\$1235
Number of adults	1.3	1.8
Number of workers (other than the leaver)	0.12	0.5
Number under 18	2.2	2
Age of leaver	32	33
Presence of spouse/partner	8%	41%
Receipt of TANF in last month	24%	11%
N=	217	657

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

<sup>a</sup> Low education is defined as lacking a high school degree or GED.

It is difficult to construct eligibility for housing assistance for this sample for two reasons. One is that the income threshold varies greatly by area; we would only be able

to construct a threshold for those in the Kansas City and St. Louis area. Yet, because the income threshold is relatively high for those two areas (particularly relative to the rest of the state), virtually all respondents were income-eligible.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.5 Child Care Subsidies

Overall, the take-up rates for child care assistance are remarkably low.<sup>23</sup> Less than 15 percent of leavers were receiving a subsidy when surveyed. Yet almost two-thirds were employed and more than 70 percent had incomes under 130 percent of the poverty line.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, less than 40 percent of leavers had *ever* used a child care subsidy since exiting. This number might even be more surprising given that child care assistance is a major benefit to assist families in making the transition from welfare to work. Table 21 shows rates of state child care assistance at both the time of the survey and at any time since exiting AFDC.

**Table 21. Use of Child Care Subsidies by Region<sup>a</sup>  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Month of survey	14	12	14	14
Since leaving	36	34	35	37
N=	877	318	283	277

Source: State of Missouri Administrative Records

<sup>a</sup> Region refers to location at the time of exit (4th quarter of 1996), not at the time of the survey.

As with other benefits, eligibility cannot be strictly determined using this data, but approximate guidelines can be constructed. To receive a child care subsidy in Missouri, family income must be less than 130 percent of the poverty line. Additionally, a need for child care must be demonstrated. Employment is of course a common reason for need, but subsidies are also granted for other need categories, including education, job training, or incapacitation of a parent.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The income threshold is 30 percent of median area income. In Kansas City, this is \$54,200, while in St. Louis it is \$52,000. The income ceilings are thus \$16,260 and \$15,600 respectively.

<sup>23</sup> All information regarding receipt of child care subsidies comes from administrative data only.

<sup>24</sup> 130 percent of the poverty line is the income cutoff for child care assistance.

<sup>25</sup> The possibilities under “need” for child care are more numerous than those mentioned above; education and job training, however, characterize the majority besides employment.

Table 22 shows child care receipt for leavers in the low-income working population who clearly met both the income and need requirements.<sup>26</sup> At the time of the survey, 28 percent of those eligible were using a subsidy, while over half (55%) had used child care assistance in the two and one half years since leaving AFDC. However, the take-up rates are still quite low. These figures raise the critical question of why more families are not using this, especially when more than one-third of the total sample reported that child care had been a barrier to work. It cannot be due to a lack of availability of assistance since there are no waiting lists for child care assistance in Missouri.

**Table 22. Use of Child Care Subsidies  
Eligible Households Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Month of survey	28	31	26	29
Since leaving	55	60	50	56
N=	275	81	103	91

Source: State of Missouri Administrative Records.

Although the low take-up rates of child care assistance are disturbing, other states are finding similar patterns. Additionally, from these studies, it appears that lack of awareness of this program is a major barrier to its widespread use (Schumaker and Greenberg 1999).

Among those eligible, certain characteristics differentiated households that used child care subsidies from those that did not (Table 23).<sup>27</sup> Leavers without subsidies were more educated and older. They lived in households with more adults; therefore, they may have had less of a need for outside child care. Since almost a quarter had a spouse or partner, someone may be able to stay home and watch any children. Households with subsidies contained more children, as well as younger children, which may indicate a greater need for child care. Households that lacked subsidies were also much less likely to have relied on Food Stamps in the prior month. As was true with other benefits, use of other programs may provide important eligibility and referral information.

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<sup>26</sup> Households were defined as eligible if they met the income criteria, contained an employed respondent, and had a child under 13. As such, this is a conservative estimate of eligible households. This is particularly true for estimates of use over time as younger children could have been in the household previously, and work status might also have changed over time.

<sup>27</sup> Note, however, that the sample size is quite small for these groups, particularly those who received a subsidy.

**Table 23. Household Characteristics by Child Care Receipt  
Eligible Households Only, Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Received child care assistance in month prior to survey	
	Yes	No
Low education <sup>a</sup>	21%	37%
Household size	3.9	3.7
Household income (median)	\$1000	\$1000
Number of adults	1.2	1.5
Number of workers (besides R)	0.1	0.2
Number under 18	2.8	2.1
Age of leaver	27	31
Presence of spouse/partner	7%	23%
Age of youngest child	4	6
Received Food Stamps in last month	69%	47%
N=	75	200

Sources: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Administrative Records.

<sup>a</sup> Low education is defined as lacking a high school degree or GED.

### 3.6 WIC

A final form of assistance examined in this study was Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Information on the use of WIC was collected at the time of the survey. Overall, just under one quarter of leavers reported receiving this benefit. Rates of receipt were somewhat higher for leavers outside of Kansas City and St. Louis, a pattern found for receipt of other benefits as well.

**Table 24. Use of WIC by Region  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Kansas City (%)	St. Louis (%)	Rest of state (%)
Percent receiving when surveyed	23	21	19	25
N=	877	533	251	93

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

Examining receipt of WIC by work status, intermittent workers were once again more likely to have been receiving this benefit at the time of the survey (30%). Yet, 20 percent of those working when surveyed also reported WIC receipt.

**Table 25. Use of WIC by Work History  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Statewide (%)	Currently working (%)	Formerly Worked (%)	Never Worked (%)
Percent receiving when surveyed	23	20	30	25
N=	877	533	251	93

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey.

In addition to these six benefits (TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, public housing, child care subsidies and WIC), we also know that in the month prior to survey, 12 percent of leavers received SSI, 9 percent reported Survivor's Benefits, 2 percent received unemployment compensation, and 1 percent had income from workers' compensation.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.7 Multiple Types of Assistance

We examined the number of different types of assistance received at either the time of the survey or in the last calendar month. Six kinds of assistance were examined: TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, public housing, child care subsidies, and WIC. Overall, more than 75 percent of leavers were relying on one or more types of assistance at the time of the survey (Table 26).<sup>29</sup> One-third of the sample was using three or more kinds of assistance.

**Table 26. Number of Benefits Received at Time of Survey  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

Number of benefit types	Percent receiving <sup>a</sup>
0	25
1	18
2	23
3	17
4	15
5	2
6	0

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Administrative Records.

<sup>a</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The most common type of assistance received was Medicaid, either for an adult or child.<sup>30</sup> Of those leavers receiving only one type of assistance, 60 percent received

<sup>28</sup> For more information on income sources, see "Household Income and Poverty of Former Missouri AFDC Recipients," Midwest Research Institute.

<sup>29</sup> In this section, "time of the survey" refers to either the day of the survey or the calendar month preceding it. See Table 1 for further information.

<sup>30</sup> Recall that this could include MC + programs.

Medicaid. Additionally, for those leavers who received more than one benefit, Medicaid was almost always part of the assistance package.

Only 1 percent of those receiving only one benefit received TANF; it was almost universally used in combination with other kinds of support (Table 27). Those receiving TANF were receiving, on average, between three and four benefits (including TANF).

**Table 27. Types of Assistance Received by Number of Types Received  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	1 source (%)	2 sources (%)	3 sources (%)	4 or more sources (%)
Medicaid	63	90	93	97
Food Stamps	13	60	84	97
WIC	11	20	34	59
Public housing	11	16	48	71
TANF	1	5	26	49
Child care	2	10	15	45
N=	174	200	139	150

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey; State of Missouri Administrative Records.

For those leavers receiving only one benefit, WIC and public housing were as prevalent as Food Stamps. Conversely, only 2 percent of the sample had child care assistance as their only form of assistance. Because of the increased attention and funding given to child care assistance, we had expected that for many families, it would be their only form of assistance. Clearly this was not the case.

For those households receiving two benefits, we examined the most common combinations of benefits. Of those found most frequently, all included Medicaid. Over half received Food Stamps and Medicaid. Seventeen percent used Medicaid and WIC, while ten percent reported Medicaid and child care subsidies.

We also examined the characteristics of families receiving different numbers of benefits (Table 26). As expected, income was strikingly different across the groups since these are all means-tested programs. Other factors that are generally associated with income, such as education level and presence of a spouse or partner, also varied between the groups, with higher education and a spouse being associated with lower numbers of benefits. Additionally, intermittent workers were disproportionately represented among those with more benefits. For example, intermittent workers comprised 16 percent of households that received one benefit, but 43 percent of households that received four or more types of assistance. Although work status was clearly associated with the number of benefits received, it should also be noted that among households with four or more benefits, almost half (46%) were employed when surveyed.

**Table 28. Household Characteristics by Number of Types of Assistance  
Former Missouri AFDC Recipients**

	Number of Benefits Received when Surveyed				
	0	1	2	3	4 or more
Household income	\$1650	\$1263	\$963	\$890	\$603
Household size	3.5	3.9	3.8	3.8	4
Age	34	35	34	32	28
Low education <sup>a</sup>	19%	36%	35%	35%	43%
Presence of spouse/partner	46%	45%	30%	18%	14%
Number of adults	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.3
<b>Work history</b>					
Currently working	78%	74%	69%	56%	46%
Formerly worked	14%	16%	23%	32%	43%
Never worked	8%	10%	9%	13%	11%
N=	215	174	200	139	150

Source: Missouri Leavers' Survey, State of Missouri Income Maintenance Files, and other Administrative Records.

<sup>a</sup> Low education is defined as lacking a high school degree or GED.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Examining the use of programs targeted to poor and low income populations provides another perspective on the progress of former AFDC recipients toward self sufficiency. Virtually all respondents had used assistance programs since leaving AFDC. Notably, half had returned to TANF for some period of time. Two and one-half years after exit, most former AFDC recipients were still relying on one or more assistance programs. Seventy-five percent of leavers were using at least one form of assistance and more than one-third were using three or more. Almost two-thirds of the households had at least one person covered by Medicaid and half received Food Stamps. Twenty-five percent of leaver households received housing assistance or WIC. Smaller proportions of leavers took advantage of child care assistance or were currently receiving cash assistance through TANF. These findings are consistent with results presented in earlier chapters, which showed that although at least one person was working in 80 percent of leaver households, most remained poor. This analysis adds to that picture by showing high levels and continuing use of assistance programs targeted to low income families.

The differential take-up rates among the six low-income assistance programs do not necessarily signify differential need for the different types of services. Although need certainly plays a role in the use of services, utilization also is affected by knowledge of program availability, ease of access to the program, differential eligibility requirements, perceived stigma attached to program participation, and in some cases, service availability. More work needs to be done to understand the differential, and sometimes low, take-up rates of these programs.

These six programs represent different points on the continuum of self-sufficiency. At the low end of the continuum is the use of cash assistance through TANF. At the

higher end are programs such as WIC, which many perceive to be a nutrition program, rather than a support for low-income families. Perhaps the most puzzling finding was the low take-up rate for child care assistance, given the extensive work effort and low income of these families.

Several of these assistance programs are considered to be transitional supports for families leave cash assistance. The implication from our findings is that the “transition” may cover an extended period of time. Indeed, the observed utilization patterns raise the question of whether these supports should be viewed as transitional at all, or if they would be more accurately characterized as supports for low income families.