

Report #3

Alameda County
CalWORKs Needs Assessment

**Barriers Associated with Working,
Hardships of Daily Living,
Progress through CalWORKs
and Work-related Activities**

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Executive Summary

This report presents results from a variety of analyses carried out on the first wave of data gathered for the Alameda County CalWORKs Needs Assessment Study. It follows two earlier reports which described the study sample and contained descriptive information on health-related and other potential barriers to successful departure from welfare. This third report includes in-depth analyses of the relationships between potential barriers to working and whether respondents were working at the time of the first interview, as well as descriptive information on hardships faced by the respondents (securing adequate food, shelter and clothing), respondents' progression through the various steps that comprise CalWORKs, and their participation in work-related activities. A final chapter introduces the concept of self-sufficiency, which will be a focus of studies examining longitudinal data from the study sample.

Section I reviews the study and the sample of CalWORKs recipients. The sample recruited for this report consists of 512 adult respondents on the CalWORKs rolls in October 1998. They were interviewed between November 1998 and May 1999. The interviews were quite extensive and covered a myriad of topics related directly and indirectly to barriers to working among this population. Demographic information was gathered as were detailed data about current household composition and changes in that composition in the preceding year. Respondents were asked about their education, work history and skills, welfare history, family history, physical and mental health, alcohol and drug use, criminal history, and their children. In addition, data were gathered on personal and household income and its sources, respondents' need for and use of child care and transportation, current employment status and job search activities and involvement in CalWORKs programs.

Section II presents analyses of the relationships between factors that potentially act as barriers to employment for CalWORKs recipients. The analyses address the likelihood that study participants were working at the time of the first interview, which occurred soon after the CalWORKs program began in Alameda County. These potential barriers were grouped into five categories: health-related, human capital, family background, logistics and criminal background.

Multivariate analyses, in the form of logistic regression models, were carried out to estimate which potential barriers remained associated with the odds of working after accounting for other potential barriers and for respondents' demographic characteristics.

At the time of the interview, one-quarter of the sample was usually working 26 or more hours per week. This figure was used because it corresponds to CalWORKs regulations that enrollees participate in 26 hours of work and/or work-related activities weekly. Of the many potential barriers to working tested, only five remained statistically associated with respondents' employment status after taking other potential barriers and demographic factors into account. Respondents who had a history of involvement with the criminal justice system were less likely to be working than those without. Persons who reported regular heavy drinking were slightly less likely to be working than those who did not. Moreover, respondents with a criminal history were more likely to be heavy drinkers (and vice versa). Accordingly, those with both of these potential barriers were only one-tenth as likely to be working as those with neither barrier. Respondents without reliable, affordable transportation were less likely to be working than those with access to this resource. Similarly, the odds of working for those without adequate child care were lower than for those without this barrier. Lack of access to transportation and to child care were found to be correlated; respondents who faced both these barriers were only 6 percent as likely to be employed as those with neither barrier. Number of job skills was also associated with working. Respondents with a greater number of skills were about twice as likely to be working as those with no skills or few skills. Finally, persons who had a baby in the past year were marginally less likely to be employed than other respondents.

Section III of this report includes information on the extent of hardships people face due to low incomes and lack of ability to pay for the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing. One-third of the sample spent at least half of their monthly income on rent and utilities; only one-fifth spent less than a quarter of their income on housing expenses. On average, respondents' housing costs accounted for 42 percent of their income, and 46 percent of the study participants were unable to pay their full rent and/or utility bills sometime in the past year. One in seven respondents experienced moderate or severe hunger in the past year and another quarter suffered

from poor diet quality. Four in ten reported needing help with obtaining free or low-cost clothing for themselves or their children. Four out of five respondents suffered at least one of the five hardships monitored, and almost half faced at least two hardships.

Section IV of the report addresses respondents' progression through CalWORKs. At the time of the survey, two-thirds had attended a CalWORKs orientation, and just over half reported that they had registered with CalWORKs. One-quarter reported that they were assigned an employment counselor, and a similar proportion had been appraised for their work readiness. Almost one in five had developed a welfare-to-work plan with their CalWORKs employment counselor. It is likely that these numbers reflect the fact that respondents were interviewed soon after CalWORKs was inaugurated.

Section V examines respondents' involvement in work-related activities, such as looking for work and participating in training or school. Overall, one-quarter of the respondents were neither working, looking for work nor enrolled in training or education programs. One-quarter were in school or training, and 31 percent were searching for a job. Four in ten were regularly working; of those employed, a third worked fewer than 26 hours and two-thirds worked 26 or more hours.

Section VI introduces a discussion on how research, such as the Alameda County CalWORKs study, might contribute to the central policy question of whether former welfare recipients become self-sufficient. As longitudinal data become available, measures will be developed to address this question.

In conclusion, this report lends support to some, but by no means all, the assumptions surrounding barriers to work among welfare recipients. We find evidence that lack of child care, transportation and work skills, a criminal history and, to a lesser degree, heavy drinking and the recent birth of a child serve as barriers to work. At the same time, we find no evidence that mental health symptoms, physical health problems, use of illegal drugs, family violence or childhood abuse also qualify as barriers to work at an early phase of Alameda County's welfare reform.

Hardships were omnipresent among study participants. It remains to be seen how successfully both barriers and hardships will be addressed as welfare recipients progress through the CalWORKs program and/or leave welfare. Data from follow-up interviews in the spring and summer of 2000 should shed considerable light on these matters.

I. Introduction

This report is the third in a series on the Alameda County CalWORKs Needs Assessment Study. The first two reports presented information on the demographics of the sample and the types and numbers of barriers that various subgroups reported. Both of these reports used the first wave of data gathered from the study sample.

This report also uses data from the first wave of interviews with the sample. It covers several different but related facets of the situations, conditions and experiences that the people in the sample face as they coped with the demise of AFDC, the old welfare system, and the establishment and fine tuning of the new system, known in California as CalWORKs. This section of the report provides an overview of the subsequent sections, each of which is devoted to a set of statistical analyses examining different aspects of survey respondents' experiences. All of the respondents were enrolled in the Alameda County CalWORKs program in October 1998. Thus, all share some similarities in that they were all faced with responding to the new welfare program unfolding in Alameda County.

Overview

Section I provides an overview to the report and reviews essential demographic and other characteristics of the study participants.

Section II, Barriers to Working, presents results of analyses that explored how potential barriers to working are related to the likelihood that respondents were working at the time they were interviewed. This section includes both bivariate and multivariate analyses of these relationships. Bivariate analyses focus on the statistical relationship between each potential barrier and working, in this case defined as whether respondents were usually working 26 hours or more a week. (When Wave I interviews were being conducted, CalWORKs mandated that most participants be working or participating in approved work-related activities a minimum of 26 hours per week. That minimum has since risen to 32 hours per week.) Multivariate analyses are also used to assess the likelihood of working. These analytical models include a number of

independent variables, in this case potential barriers to work, along with demographic and other control variables, in order to assess possible correlations and associations among these variables. Moreover, the multivariate models assess the relationships between these barrier, demographic, and other variables and the outcome variable, controlling for other factors. The barrier variables for these analyses were based on those presented in Report 2. Several have been modified to function better in the analyses.

For the sake of presentation, only the relationships between the barriers to working and the outcome variable are presented in Section II. The full final multivariate model, which includes control variables as well as barriers to working, is not presented in the body of the report, nor are preliminary multivariate models. Readers interested in seeing the full model and the preliminary models will find them in Appendix A. This appendix contains a full explanation of the reasoning behind the model construction and contains tables with the full preliminary and final models.

Potential barriers to working are divided into five categories. Health-related barriers include measures of physical and mental health and of substance abuse. Human capital barriers include respondents' formal educational attainment and the number of useful work skills they possess. The third group of barriers deals with family background, including childhood abuse, current family situations, including family violence, and children. The logistical obstacles of obtaining reliable and affordable transportation and reliable, affordable and quality child care comprise the fourth category of barriers. The final category of barriers to working includes criminal history and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Section III, Hardships of Daily Living, explores the prevalence and distribution of hardships experienced by the sample respondents in three main areas - housing, food and hunger, and clothing. These analyses are bivariate, and therefore descriptive in nature. They show the distribution of hardships in these three areas across a number of demographic characteristics of the respondents, including race/ethnicity, gender, family structure, household size and age. The results allow a first look at which subgroups are more likely to suffer which types of hardships and to what extent. The daily grind of having to provide food, clothing and shelter takes its toll.

This is particularly true for people with relatively few resources who are trying to navigate the changing welfare system as well as enter the work force. An understanding of the magnitude of that toll will be helpful for those who are responsible for developing and carrying out welfare policies and programs.

Section IV, Progression through CalWORKs Activities, presents descriptive analyses that track the survey respondents' progress through the numerous steps that comprise the CalWORKs program. Respondents were asked if they had attended a CalWORKs orientation, the first step in the process, if they had registered in the program, had their skills appraised and were assigned an employment counselor, and had signed a welfare-to-work contract, the final step in the process.

This process was examined from two directions. First, respondents who were working the minimum mandated hours at the time of the survey were compared to those who were not. While it is not possible to determine whether the employed respondents became employed as a result of their participation in CalWORKs or whether they obtained their jobs through other means, we begin to test the hypothesis that there may be a correlation between participating in and completing the CalWORKs process and working. To this end, we loosely treat working as an outcome of the CalWORKs process. Second, we examine factors that might be associated with respondents' participation in the process.

Section V, Self-sufficiency, takes this report beyond the data and analyses presented here and initiates a discussion of the factors important to welfare recipients not only finding work, but graduating to self-sufficiency. This is an important distinction, since much of the research on welfare leavers, both before and after welfare reform, suggests that most find only low-skilled, low-paying jobs without benefits. Thus, many leavers are not better off working than they were receiving welfare. This calculus is particularly salient once the *costs* of work, including transportation, child care, and clothing, are taken into account. An additional factor in the equation is loss of publicly-funded health insurance. For welfare reform to be a success, former welfare recipients must also be truly successful, a status that will require the establishment of appropriate social, economic and health policies.

Sample

The sample used for this report consists of 512 adult respondents on the CalWORKs rolls in October 1998. They were interviewed between November 1998 and May 1999. The interviews were quite extensive and covered a myriad of topics related directly and indirectly to barriers to working among this population. Demographic information was gathered as were detailed data about current household composition and changes in that composition in the preceding year. Respondents were asked about their education, work history and skills, welfare history, family history, physical and mental health, alcohol and drug use, criminal history, and their children. In addition, data were gathered on personal and household income and its sources, respondents' need for and use of child care and transportation, current employment status and job search activities and involvement in CalWORKs programs.

Table I-1 below provides a snapshot of the sample; this information will be useful when reading the following sections as most analyses incorporate this basic demographic information.

All analyses use five "racial/ethnic" groups - African American, White, Latino, Vietnamese and Other. The Other group includes Asians who are not Vietnamese, American Indians, and people reporting mixed ancestry. Just over half the sample is African American. Others and Whites make up the next largest subgroups, at about 13 percent each. Latinos and Vietnamese each comprise between 9 and 10 percent of the sample. We recognize that Vietnamese is not a racial/ethnic group as normally defined in the United States, but rather a group defined by national origin. However, we treat Vietnamese respondents as a separate group for cross-group comparisons in this study for several reasons. They comprise the second largest non-English language group in the County's CalWORKs population, after Spanish-speaking participants. Moreover, the sociodemographic characteristics and history of this group in the U.S. are so different from those of other groups in the study that they merit treatment as a separate group rather than inclusion in a general Asian category. Those differences include not only language, but also a history of refugee status and specific cultural attitudes towards family, work, and the roles of women.

Table I-1. Basic Demographics of the Sample and Working at Baseline

	N	Percent
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	281	54.9
White	67	13.1
Latino	49	9.6
Vietnamese	47	9.2
Other	68	13.3
Gender		
Male	42	8.2
Female	470	91.8
Age		
18-24	110	21.5
25-34	191	37.3
35-44	166	32.4
45-59	45	8.8
Family Structure		
2 parent	52	10.2
1 parent	460	89.8
Household Size		
4 or fewer	326	63.7
5 or more	186	36.3
Working		
26 hours or more	134	26.2
25 hours or less	378	73.8

Unlike many other states, California permitted single male parents and couples to receive AFDC and continues to include them among CalWORKS recipients. Thus, while the welfare caseloads in most states consist almost exclusively of single mothers and their children, the picture in California is more heterogeneous. Overall, in this sample of Alameda welfare recipients, 8.2 percent were male. However, one-quarter of the Vietnamese respondents were male; about half of whom were single parents.

The third panel of Table I-1 presents the age distribution of the sample. The sample was restricted to recipients who were 18 to 59 years old. About one-fifth (21.5%) were 18 to 24 years old at the time of the interview, 37.3 percent were 25 to 34 years old, about one-third (32.4%) were 35 to 44 years old and 8.8 percent were 45 to 59 years old. The mean age was 32.5 years.

One-tenth (10.2%) of the respondents were classified as two-parent cases by the County; the rest (89.8%) were classified as single-parent cases. Slightly less than two-thirds (63.7%) of the sample lived in households with four or fewer members; just over one-third (36.3%) lived in households that contained five or more people.

We use a single definition for analyses that focus on employment status in this report. Respondents who reported that they usually worked 26 hours or more a week were classified as working. Those that reported not working at all or regularly working fewer than 26 hours were classified as not working. This definition is based on CalWORKs work requirements. At the time the survey was administered, CalWORKs clients were required to be engaged in work or work-related activities for a minimum of 26 hours per week.

II. Barriers to Working

A number of the potential barriers discussed in Report 2 are associated with respondents' working 26 or more hours a week at the time of the interview. Overall, one-quarter of the sample (26.2%) reported regularly working at least 26 hours per week, the minimum number of hours set by CalWORKs for involvement in work and work-related activities at the time the baseline interviews were administered. The measure used in these analyses includes only work and not work-related activities and thus, is stricter than the actual CalWORKs regulations. The proportion of the sample working that many hours differs significantly depending on the number and type of potential barriers they report. (From this point on, unless otherwise noted, "working" or "employed" refers to working at least 26 hours per week.)

This section of the report presents information on barriers that were hypothesized to be associated with working. For each barrier, we report whether there was a significant association

with working at the bivariate level. In each case, cross-tabulations were used to describe the association, and chi-square tests were used to estimate the statistical significance of the associations. Only those barriers which were significantly associated with working are presented in the tables in this section.

The bivariate results show the percentage of respondents with a particular barrier or combination of barriers who were working and compares that percentage to the proportion of people working among those who did not report the barrier(s) in question. These descriptive analyses do not take into account other factors, including demographic factors such as age, sex or race/ethnicity, other barriers, or hardships that may account for a portion of the observed relationship between the particular barrier and working. That is, while some or all of the association between a barrier and working may be due to other variables that are associated with both the barrier and with working, such complexity would not be evident in bivariate results.

The multivariate results are presented in the form of odds ratios. These express the likelihood that respondents in a particular barrier category are working compared to the reference category, whose value is always set to 1.00. Thus, an odds ratio greater than one signifies that the presumed barrier acted not as a barrier to work but was associated with a greater likelihood of working than the reference group, whereas an odds ratio less than one means that the variable is associated with a lower likelihood of working. The odds ratios are calculated holding a host of other factors constant, including demographic factors and other barriers to working.

In this way, the multivariate models partially address a limitation inherent in bivariate analyses by calculating odds ratios whose value is net of the effect of other variables included in the models. Of course, there are many factors that influence whether people were working, and our questionnaire could only include a partial list of them. This means that while the odds ratios can be interpreted as accounting for the variables we were able to measure and include in the multivariate model, there are many unobserved variables whose effect we cannot or did not measure and, hence, were not able to estimate in the model.

Potential barriers to working were divided into five general categories: health-related, human capital, family and child-related, logistics, and other barriers. We categorized three types of potential barriers to working as health-related. Mental health barriers, physical health barriers and alcohol and other drug barriers fell into this category. A number of potential barriers to working were related to individuals' level of human capital, the skills and knowledge that current and former CalWORKs recipients possess that are valued by employers and the economy in general. Potential barriers in this category include the presence of a learning disability, the level of formal education, and the type and variety of work skills and experience a person has acquired. A third category of potential barriers to working focused on characteristics of people's family background and situation, including the presence of children with special needs. Potential barriers in this category included abuse suffered in childhood, which has been recently linked to the inability of some welfare recipients to find and keep work through its effects on their emotional well-being, family violence, and having a child with special needs. Logistic barriers included lack of transportation and lack of affordable child care at convenient locations and available when parents need it. One additional barrier was having an adult felony conviction or current involvement in the criminal justice system.

Not all potential barriers were found to be correlated with working in the early phase of welfare reform in this sample of CalWORKs recipients. The next several paragraphs describe the construction of the barriers tested for their association with working and report whether they were found to be significantly associated with working at the bivariate level. Significant barriers are included in Table II-1 which presents the bivariate findings. These barriers were then included in subsequent multivariate logistic regression models that further examined respondents' likelihood of working.

Potential Health Barriers

The mental health variable was constructed using respondents' answers to the 53 items included in the survey from the Symptom Checklist-90 (Derogatis, Lipman & Covi, 1973). The SCL-90 was developed in the early 1970s to gauge symptoms of mental distress. Nine areas are covered in the scale: depression, interpersonal sensitivity, obsessive-compulsive behavior, paranoia,

hostility, anxiety, phobic anxiety, somatization (physical symptoms) and psychotic thoughts. Responses for each item in the checklist range from “not at all” bothered to “extremely” bothered in the past seven days. Different cutoffs were used for males and females to account for documented differences between the sexes in answering these items.

The previous report combined information from the SCL-90 with additional questions on people’s mental health to create a broader measure of mental health (Green, Fujiwara, Norris, Kappoda, Driscoll & Speigman, 2000). This report uses only the SCL-90 information. Respondents who reported many symptoms were placed in one group, those who reported no, few or transient symptoms were placed in the reference group. The group with many symptoms may suffer from mental health problems at levels high enough to indicate the need for treatment. Overall, 17.8 percent of the sample fell into the group with more mental health problems. People in this group were significantly less likely to be working at the time of the interview than those with fewer problems. This simple association suggests that mental health problems present a barrier to employment.

To create a potential physical health barrier, respondents were asked if they had any of a host of possible physical conditions or diseases in the last twelve months, ranging from problems with sight or hearing to cancer to diabetes or hepatitis. For each health problem reported, respondents were asked if that problem interfered with their ability to work, look for work or participate in job training programs. Four in ten (40.6%) reported at least one physical problem or condition that interfered with these activities. Nevertheless, unlike the preliminary findings for mental health, having a physical health problem does not appear to constitute a barrier to working because there was no correlation between physical health and working.

The construction of potential substance abuse barriers in this report differs from that of Report 2. Test analyses for this report showed that combining drug and alcohol abuse problems masked the different associations each type of problem has with working. The proportion of people working among those who reported using illegal drugs once a week or more in the past year does not differ from the proportion working among those who did not use drugs that often or at all. This

result may be due to the fact that marijuana is by far the most commonly used drug reported by respondents. While 17.6 percent reported using marijuana in the last twelve months, the use of harder drugs was considerably rarer. For example, only 2.7 percent of the sample reported using cocaine or crack in the last year.

Respondents were asked about their drinking patterns. Among other questions, they were asked how often they had five or more drinks (but less than twelve) or twelve or more drinks at one sitting in the last twelve months. Respondents who answered that they drank either amount about once a month or more in the last year were placed in a heavy drinking category; this group constitutes 10.5 percent of the sample. Those who responded that it happened never or less often were placed in a second category, abstainers and non-heavy drinkers. Respondents in the first category were half as likely to be working as those who rarely or ever had multiple drinks at one time in the past year.

Potential Human Capital Barriers

The proportion of respondents who reported being told that they had a learning disability or related problem is relatively low, 6.8 percent. Having a diagnosed learning disability is not associated with working at the bivariate level. It is possible that our sample includes respondents with undiagnosed learning disabilities, a situation that may be more likely among those who grew up abroad and thus did not go through the U.S. school system where many learning disabilities are diagnosed and labeled. Moreover, respondents with a diagnosed disability may have received treatment or services that ameliorate the negative effects of the disability, while those with undiagnosed disabilities also went untreated. If this is indeed the case, the expected negative relationship between a diagnosed learning disability and work status may not exist. Respondents with diagnosed and treated learning disabilities might be better able to work than those with undiagnosed, and therefore, unaddressed learning problems who appear in the data as not having a learning disability.

Four in ten (39.5%) respondents dropped out of school before graduating and did not subsequently earn a GED. Another 9.2 percent also dropped out of school but did earn a GED.

Three in ten (29.9%) had a high school diploma and about one-fifth (21.5%) had gone beyond high school. Those who did not finish high school or earn a GED were the least likely to be working; close to one-fifth (18.8%) of this group was working at the time of the interview. Earning a GED increased the likelihood of working; one-quarter (25.5%) of these respondents were working. Graduating from high school was correlated with an even higher likelihood of working; one-third (34.0%) of those with a diploma were employed. However, respondents with any post-secondary education were not as likely to be working as those with just a high school diploma (29.1% vs. 34.0%).

Respondents were asked if they had work experience or training in a wide variety of job skills, most commensurate with employment in low to medium-skilled positions. From that list of skills, a subset of five skills was found to be correlated with the likelihood of working – operating a calculator, operating a computerized cash register, doing data entry on a computer, filing and answering a phone system. This variable represents a refinement of the work skills/experience barriers described in Report 2. In that form of the potential barrier, all job skills asked about in the survey were used in the calculation of the barrier; for this report only skills that were individually associated with working were included in the work skills and experience measure.

Approximately one-quarter (27.2%) of the sample had none or one of these skills, half (49.5%) had two to four of these skills and another quarter (23.4%) had all five of these skills. The greater the number of these key skills an individual possessed, the more likely he or she was to be working. About one-fifth of the least experienced quarter were working, compared to one-quarter of the middle half and 39.2 percent of the most skilled respondents. Overall, people who were working averaged 3.3 skills, whereas those who were not working reported an average of only 2.7 skills.

Potential Family and Child-related Barriers

Survey respondents were asked whether they experienced any of three types of abuse while they were children or teens - physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse - along with neglect.

Physical abuse is defined as having been hit, slapped or hurt by a family member and badly bruised or cut. Sexual abuse is narrowly defined as being forced by anyone to have sex. A disheartening 51.2 percent experienced at least one of these three kinds of abuse or neglect. Nevertheless, respondents in this sample who experienced any form of abuse are not less likely to be working than those who were never abused or neglected, per the bivariate analyses.

To uncover the prevalence of family violence in this sample, respondents were asked if they were physically abused in the past year by a partner or another family member who lived with them. Those who reported such abuse, 8.4 percent of the sample, were half as likely to be working as people who reported no abuse (14.0% vs. 27.3%), a difference that is marginally statistically significant. This definition is narrower than that used in Report 2, which included additional measures of whether the respondent reported needing help with a violence problem.

One in eight respondents (12.9%) had a child in the year prior to the interview. Those who did were less likely to be working than other respondents (16.7% vs. 27.6%), although this difference is only marginally statistically significant.

All respondents were asked if any of their children required a great deal of care from them for a physical, medical or emotional problem; 22.5 percent answered affirmatively. However, those who did were just as likely to be working as those who did not have such a child.

Table II-1. Bivariate Associations between Barriers and Working

Barrier	% Working 26 Hours or More
Mental Health Barrier**	
Many Symptoms (17.8% of sample)	15.4
Few or Some Symptoms	28.5
Heavy Drinking Once a Month or More*	
Yes (10.5% of sample)	13.0
No	27.7
Educational Attainment*	
Less than high school (39.5% of sample)	18.8
GED (9.2% of sample)	25.5
High school diploma (29.9% of sample)	34.0
Some post-secondary education (21.5% of sample)	29.1
Number of Work Skills (0-5)**	
0 - 1 skills (27.2% of sample)	18.7
2 - 4 skills (49.5% of sample)	24.1
5 skills (23.4% of sample)	39.2
Family Violence⁺	
Yes (8.4% of sample)	14.0
No	27.3
Had a Child in the Last Year⁺	
Yes (12.9% of sample)	16.7
No	27.6
Lacks License <i>and</i> Access to Auto***	
Yes (61.1% of sample)	19.5
No	36.7
Needs, Cannot Find Night Child Care***	
Yes (16.4% of sample)	7.1
No	29.9
Felony Conviction/In Criminal Justice System**	
Yes (14.1% of sample)	11.1
No	28.6

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Potential Logistic Barriers

Lack of transportation appears to be a hurdle for many CalWORKs recipients. Lack of access to private transportation is one measure of whether transportation is a barrier to working. The measure used here focuses on access to private transportation while the measures in Report 2 combined measures of access to both private and public transportation. Only 38.9 percent of the sample had both a driver's license and access to a car. People with a license and/or access to a car were far more likely to be working than people without these resources.

The lack of affordable child care at convenient locations and available when parents need it appears to act as a substantial barrier to employment for study participants. The particular needs of one subgroup of parents serve to illustrate the child care problems of a wider group of working parents. Respondents who needed but could not find child care in the evening in order to work or attend a training program, 16.4 percent of the sample, were significantly less likely to be working when they were interviewed than were other parents.

Other Potential Barriers

Having a criminal history is associated with a lower likelihood of working among this study's respondents. Respondents who either had a felony conviction as an adult or were involved in the criminal justice system in the last 90 days (awaiting charges, trial or sentencing, out on bail, on probation or in jail or prison) were significantly less likely to be working than those with no such history or involvement in the criminal justice system.

Barrier Combinations

Some barriers tend to co-occur with others at rates that are statistically significant. We tested a number of combinations to identify these patterns.

Respondents who had a transportation barrier to work were more likely to also have a child care barrier to work than respondents without a transportation barrier. The reverse is also true; that is, those with a child care barrier were more likely also to have a transportation barrier than those without a child care barrier. Similarly, the presence of a criminal history barrier and a heavy drinking barrier occur together at a statistically significant level.

Moreover, it appears that the relationship between these combinations of barriers and working is not merely additive (Table II-2). For example, while respondents with either a transportation barrier or a child care barrier are less likely to be working than respondents with neither of these barriers, those with both barriers are far less likely to be working than are all other respondents, including those with neither barrier and those with one of the two barriers. The same is true

Table II-2. Barrier Combinations and Working

Barrier Combination	% Working 26 Hours/Week or More
Transportation & Child Care Barriers***	
Neither barrier (34.6% of sample)	39.5
Transportation barrier only (49.0% of sample)	23.1
Child care barrier only (4.3% of sample)	13.6
Both barriers (12.1% of sample)	4.8
Criminal History & Heavy Drinking Barriers**	
Neither barrier (78.9% of sample)	29.7
Criminal history barrier only (10.5% of sample)	13.0
Heavy drinking barrier only (7.0% of sample)	16.7
Both barriers (3.5% of sample)	5.6

+ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

for the criminal history and heavy drinking barriers combination, with respondents reporting both potential barriers the least likely to be working. While other barriers were significantly related to each other (including family violence and heavy drinking, mental health problems and alcohol abuse, and mental health and family violence), having a combination of those barriers did not change associations with work status to a noteworthy degree.

Bivariate and Multivariate Relationships between Barriers and Working

All of the barriers presented in Table II-1 were significantly associated with working at the bivariate level. They were entered into multivariate logistic regression models to estimate whether these associations remained statistically significant after controlling for other barriers

and for respondents' demographic characteristics. In addition, the two barrier combinations presented in Table II-2 above were included in these models to ascertain whether the associations between these combinations and working remained significant as well.

Each panel in Table II-3 presents a single or combination barrier that remained significant in the multivariate model. Two ways of measuring the relationship between the barriers and regularly working 26 hours or more at the time of the interview are presented. The first column of figures repeats those in Tables II-1 and II-2; they represent the proportion of respondents in each category who were working. These percentages are simple cross-tabulations and do not take into account other factors which might affect the relationship between each barrier and working. In Table II-3, all the bivariate differences are statistically significant.

The second column of figures presents odds ratios generated using logistic regression models in which each barrier was included as was a long list of demographic and other control factors. These factors are race/ethnicity, age, gender, presence of a spouse or partner, age of children in the household, whether English is the respondent's first language and whether a grandparent or other relative provided regular child care. For each single barrier or barrier combination, one category serves as the reference group to which the other categories are compared. Thus, these are relative odds, and the actual value depends on which group serves as the reference category. The odds ratios are interpreted as the likelihood of working compared to the reference category, controlling for all other variables in the model. (Appendix A contains the full logistic regression models.) An odds ratio of less than 1.0 means that respondents in this category are less likely to be working than those in the reference group. An odds ratio of greater than 1.0 means that they are more likely to be working. Superscripts in column 3 signify that the difference between the odds of working in the category of interest and the reference category is statistically significant.

Table II-3. Bivariate and Multivariate Associations between Barriers and Working

Barrier	% Working (Bivariate)	Odds Ratio (Multivariate)
<i>Criminal History & Heavy Drinking Barriers</i>		
Neither (ref)	29.7 ^a	1.00
Criminal history only	13.0	0.27**
Heavy drinking only	16.7	0.40 ⁺
Criminal history & heavy drinking	5.6	0.10*
<i>Transportation & Child Care Barriers</i>		
Neither (ref)	39.5 ^b	1.00
Transportation only	23.1	0.43**
Child care only	13.6	0.22*
Transportation & child care	4.8	0.06***
<i>Number of Work Skills</i>		
0-1 skills	18.7 ^c	0.46*
2-4 skills	24.1	0.51*
5 skills (ref)	35.1	1.00
<i>Had a Child in the Last Year</i>		
Yes	16.7 ^d	0.50 ⁺
No (ref)	27.6	1.00

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

^acriminal history and heavy drinking categories are significantly different at p ≤ .001 level

^btransportation and child care categories are significantly different at p ≤ .001 level

^cwork skills categories are significantly different at p ≤ .01 level

^dhad a child in last year significantly different from no child in last year at p ≤ 0.1 level

Criminal History & Heavy Drinking Barriers. Having a criminal history and/or engaging in heavy drinking is associated with working both before and after controlling for other factors. At the bivariate level, those with neither barrier were working at more than twice the rate of those with only a criminal history barrier and almost twice the rate of those with only a heavy drinking barrier. Respondents with neither barrier were about five times more likely to be working than those with both barriers (29.7% vs. 5.6%).

Even after controlling for demographic characteristics and the presence of other barriers, criminal history and heavy drinking remain related to working. Respondents with a criminal history only are only one-quarter as likely to be working as those with neither a criminal history nor a heavy drinking problem (OR = 0.27**). The difference between having only a heavy drinking problem and having neither barrier is weaker and smaller but still noteworthy. Respondents in this category are only 40 percent as likely to be working as those in the reference group, but the difference is only marginally significant (OR = 0.40⁺). Those with both barriers were only 10 percent as likely to be working as those with neither barrier (OR = 0.10*).

Transportation & Child Care Barriers. Transportation and child care barriers are also associated with working both before and after controlling for other factors. Before controlling for other factors, people with neither barrier are significantly more likely to be working than those with either or both of these barriers. Lack of child care appears to be a more difficult barrier to surmount in gaining employment than is lack of transportation, while the combination of both barriers appears to present a particularly formidable barrier. Four in ten people with neither barrier were working (39.5%) as were less than one-quarter of those with a transportation barrier (23.1%) and only 13.6 percent of those with a child care barrier. Just under one in twenty (4.8%) of those with both barriers were working.

Holding other factors constant does not change this pattern. Relative to those with neither barrier, respondents with only a transportation barrier were 43 percent (OR = 0.43**) as likely to be working, while those with only an evening child care barrier were only one-quarter as likely to be working (OR = 0.22*), suggesting that, even after holding other barriers and demographic characteristics constant, lack of child care remains the more difficult barrier. Moreover, respondents with both barriers were only 6 percent (OR = 0.06***) as likely to be working as those with neither barrier, implying that this particular combination of barriers makes it nearly impossible for respondents to regularly work 26 or more hours a week.

Number of Work Skills. Number of useful work skills is positively associated with working at both the bivariate and multivariate levels. At the bivariate level, less than one-fifth (18.7%) of the least skilled group were working, compared to one-quarter (24.1%) of the middle group and

more than one-third (35.1%) of the group with the most skills.

This relationship holds after controlling for other variables. Respondents with zero or one skill and those with two to four skills are about half as likely to be working as those with all five of the skills identified as useful (OR = 0.46*, 0.51*). The similar value of the odds ratios for the 0-1 and 2-4 skills categories (and post-hoc tests) suggest that, net of other factors, there is no difference in the odds of working among those with zero to four of these five skills. All respondents with less than five skills are about half as likely to be working as those with all five skills.

Birth of Child. As is the case for other barrier categories, the association between having a child in the past year and working does not appear to be affected by holding other factors constant. That is, at the bivariate level, respondents with a recent birth were about half as likely to be working as other respondents (16.7% vs. 27.3%), a difference that was marginally significant. In the multivariate model, respondents with a new child in the last year are still half as likely to be working at the time of the interview as those without a birth (OR = 0.50⁺), and the significance level remains the same.

Most, but not all, demographic and control variables were not associated with working in the multivariate model (shown in Table A-3 in Appendix A). There are no significant racial/ethnic differences in the likelihood of working, nor is age or gender associated with the odds of being employed. English as a first language is not a factor in whether people were working. Likewise, respondents with a spouse or partner are no more or less likely to be working than those without.

Two family related factors were significant in this model, however. Respondents who had a preschool-aged child in their household were more likely to be working than those without children in this age group, regardless of whether they had children of other ages. Having a teenager in the household was also associated with a greater likelihood of working, if only marginally so, whether or not they had children of other ages. The presence of a child 5-13 years old was not related to whether respondents worked. In addition, respondents who reported having a child regularly cared for by a grandparent or other relative of the child (not including the

child's parent or sibling) were significantly more likely to be working than those who did not, suggesting that having such family members contributes to welfare recipients moving into the labor force by removing or ameliorating a key barrier to work.

Summary

A few recent studies have explored the link between various obstacles to work and the work status of TANF recipients (Danziger et al., 1999; Zedlewski, 1999). This preliminary study tends to support past findings that the presence of barriers matters as does the type of barrier. This study highlights factors that appear to make it more difficult for respondents to be working. The findings also provide preliminary support for eliminating a number of potential barriers from the list of factors suspected of lowering people's ability to regularly work a substantial number of hours per week. We found that at baseline, holding constant other barriers and respondents' background and demographic characteristics, mental health problems and family violence were not associated with the likelihood of working. It is not yet possible to say whether these factors will remain unrelated to working at subsequent points in time. Analyses of follow-up data will address this question.

It is important to note that both the bivariate and multivariate analyses of the associations between potential barriers and working are exactly that, tests of statistical associations. While it is tempting to assign causality to the potential barriers we identified and tested, we cannot say that the presence of a particular barrier *causes* respondents to be more or less likely to be working. We can only say that the presence of a barrier is associated with a likelihood of working that is significantly different from the likelihood of working among those without the barrier. For example, while our conceptual model treats factors such as child care and transportation as "predictors" of working, we acknowledge that it is entirely possible that the relationship between such variables and working may in fact be reversed. That is, people with jobs may be better able to afford transportation and child care (and more likely to need both) than people who are not working. If this is the case, working may "predict" access to transportation and child care because employment temporally precedes transportation and child care.

The results of these analyses supply us with clues to various relationships which, together with data from other samples of people experiencing welfare reform in California and across the nation, will lead to a more complete understanding of what factors affect welfare recipients' chances of working.

Primary barriers to work among CalWORKs participants in the early stages of welfare reform appear to be related to their lack of work skills, shortages of child care and transportation, heavy drinking, and a background of involvement in the criminal justice system. These analyses also provide support for the idea that certain barriers, when experienced in concert, serve as particularly insurmountable obstacles to working.

These findings suggest that, among CalWORKs recipients, a criminal background is particularly deleterious to the chances of finding and keeping work. Holding a host of other factors constant, those with a criminal history were only one-fourth as likely to be employed as were other respondents. Interestingly, heavy drinking alone does not seem to play a major role in determining people's work status. But, such a history, coupled with a history of involvement in the criminal justice system, is even more damaging to people's prospects for work; people with both problems are only 10 percent as likely to be working as similar individuals without these two obstacles. It appears that these people will find, and have found, that their past or current involvement in the criminal justice system, along with their current drinking behavior, substantially limits their options for the future.

This finding suggests that people with a background of criminal involvement will need extra assistance by CalWORKs employment counselors, social workers and other staff who might assist them in getting through current criminal justice system involvement, cleaning their records and finding work. Education of potential employers by welfare officials and others of the benefits of hiring people with a criminal background may increase their chances of finding work. Financial incentives to hire welfare recipients with criminal records may provide routes to enhancing this group's chances of finding work. If steps are not taken to improve the odds of working among this subgroup of welfare recipients, the chances of welfare reform leading to an improvement in their and their children's living conditions are dismal.

The final models, as well as the preliminary bivariate analyses, strongly support the hypothesis, born out in studies of other welfare populations across the country, that transportation and child care, or rather the lack of these resources, pose a substantial barrier to the goals of welfare reform and to the hopes of many people on welfare who want to move toward self-sufficiency (U.S. GAO, 1997). Moreover, unlike the barriers of a criminal record or alcohol abuse, which affected a relatively small proportion of the respondents in this sample, two-thirds of the Alameda County CalWORKs sample faced at least one of these logistic barriers, and 12.1 percent faced both. These barriers, widespread among the population of welfare recipients, severely lower chances of finding and keeping work.

In one sense, the answers seem obvious. Welfare recipients need better access to reliable, efficient, and affordable public transportation or to the funds to buy and maintain a car. They also need access to affordable, convenient, safe, quality child care. The crafters of welfare reform foresaw these issues, and federal funds were appropriated for the states' use to provide public transportation and child care vouchers. And it seems safe to say that for people able to take advantage of these programs, child care and transportation programs increase the chances of being able to work and lower the costs of working.

However, vouchers appear to address transportation problems for only one portion of welfare recipients. Many live far from potential employers, and either they or the employers, or both, are not located close to public transportation. Nationwide, three-quarters of welfare recipients live in central cities or urban areas, while two thirds of new jobs, including many entry-level jobs, are located in the suburbs (U.S. GAO, 1998). Most of these jobs are not located near public transportation. A recent survey of 500 employers in sectors likely to have entry-level positions found that 39 percent said that they could not be reached by public transportation (Regenstein, Meyer & Hicks, 1998). Even when work sites are transit-accessible, getting to them often involves considerable time and several transfers between buses or subways. Often this burden proves to be too much for the rewards of low-paying work. Surmounting this barrier calls for action not just among those agencies and officials whose role is to implement and refine welfare reform but also from other organizations and agencies, such as transportation or planning agencies, that can address this problem in concert with welfare officials.

Similar limitations affect the utility of child care vouchers. Child care vouchers are not helpful when child care is not available at any cost. Presently, even many well-off parents are unable to find child care for their children. The working poor, a group that most people who transition off welfare to work will join, are even more hard-pressed to find adequate child care. Often, they rely on grandparents or other family, unlicensed day care, or, failing to find convenient, safe and reliable care, simply cannot work. This situation may also call for policies and programs that involve collaboration of CalWORKs officials and other public and private agencies and groups more adept at dealing with the specific issue of child care. A core reason for the shortage of quality child care is the low pay most child care workers earn. Not only does a low rate of pay fail to attract enough viable candidates, it also results in high turn-over among child care workers who are lured away by higher pay and less strenuous positions. Until ways are found to address the low pay of people in the field, while not simultaneously pricing many parents, including most working poor parents, out of the market, child care will remain a barrier for many parents trying to make the transition from welfare dependence to self-sufficiency.

The relationship between work skills and working supports the prediction that people with more work skills are more likely to find work than are people with fewer skills to offer a prospective employer. The multivariate results suggest that this is not a linear relationship, however. Each additional skill is not associated with a certain increase in the likelihood of working. Rather, respondents with none or only one skill were equally as likely to be working as were those with two to four skills. All of these people were about half as likely to be working as those who claimed all five skills. It is probably not wise to take this finding literally and to assume that welfare clients with these exact five skills are twice as likely to be working as those with a fewer number of those skills or with other skills. Instead, the findings suggest a threshold effect which further analyses will explore in greater detail. That is, possessing a minimum number of certain clerical or office skills seems to be important in improving respondents' chances of finding work. Few employers want employees who can only type but not file, or can only operate a phone system but have no data entry or other computer experience. This result suggests that the most successful training programs for people moving from welfare to work would impart a package of skills that can then be tailored to meet the needs of employers in various sectors of the economy. Given the economy in the Bay Area (and probably applicable to most regions), this package

should include various types of computer skills, as well as adequate levels of literacy and numeracy and the ability to work with co-workers and the public.

These findings contribute to the growing literature on welfare reform and how it affects the lives of recipients and their families by both confirming some past results and suggesting new avenues of research that merit further study. However, we caution the reader that these findings are based on welfare reform in its early stages. California's counties implemented CalWORKs in early 1998. Hence, many of the respondents had yet to progress very far in the CalWORKs process aimed at moving people from welfare to work. Sample members who were usually working 26 or more hours per week were "early birds" who may prove to have characteristics that distinguish them from their counterparts entering the workforce later. In addition to not informing us of what barriers may prove to inhibit work later in CalWORKs recipients' lives and in the life of the CalWORKs program, our baseline findings also fail to address whether there are barriers that may predict intermittent employment. It would be imprudent to predict how successful Alameda County's CalWORKs program will be or how people will fare over time, in terms of finding and keeping work, on the basis of these early findings. The respondents in this survey are being interviewed again, fifteen months after their first interview. The follow-up data, gathered after many more people have participated in CalWORKs, will allow us to draw firmer conclusions about the numbers of people transitioning from welfare to work and the factors that promote or hinder that process.

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III. Hardships of Daily Living

Welfare recipients and their families face high levels of hardships due to their lack of monetary and other resources. Many have trouble paying for the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. This section presents information on the level and type of hardships that welfare recipients face due to their low incomes.

We submit that the struggle to procure these basics takes a toll on people's mental, emotional and physical well-being and that of their families. These stresses are bound to take an immediate toll as well as compromise people's ability to respond to the mandates of PRWORA, including preparing for the work force, looking for work, and keeping a job while meeting their other responsibilities and eventually becoming self-sufficient. Because we currently have only cross-sectional data, it is not possible to determine whether the number and nature of people's hardships at the time of interview are a result of their work status, a predictor of that status, or neither. We can, however, examine the level of different types of hardships experienced by our sample and compare differences across people with various sociodemographic and background characteristics. The tables in this section present various hardships by race/ethnicity, gender, family structure and age. The patterns across these factors show for whom these challenges are most prevalent. Tables III-1 and III-2 deal with the relationships between income and housing costs. Table III-3 presents information on crowded housing as one aspect of housing conditions. Table III-4 shows how levels of hunger are distributed among the demographic subgroups, and Table III-5 deals with people's ability to procure needed clothing for themselves and their children.

Housing

Table III-1 presents information on respondents' housing costs. The first two columns present the mean and median income for respondents and their children for each demographic subgroup in dollars; the next two columns contain the mean and median amount respondents reported spending on both rent and utilities. The following three columns show how housing costs, as a

Table III-1. Housing Costs as a Proportion of Income by Demographic Characteristics

	Income (\$)		Housing Costs (\$)		Housing Costs as a Proportion of Income		
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	0 - 24%	25 - 49%	50 -100%
Race/Ethnicity							
African	1,020	900	423 ⁺	380	20.0	45.8	34.2
White	1,110	1,003	471	450	15.2	50.0	34.8
Latino	1,207	1,126	514	480	16.3	46.9	36.7
Vietnamese	1,059	969	403	369	23.9	47.8	28.3
Other	1,006	1,034	433	425	18.2	40.9	40.9
Gender							
Male	998	945	414	350	20.5	35.9	43.6
Female	1,056	968	440	402	19.0	46.9	34.1
Family Structure							
1 parent	1,057	965	430*	400	20.3**	47.0	32.7
2 parent	1,006	1,010	509	482	8.2	36.7	55.1
Household Size							
4 or less	1,039	882	433	380	21.7*	41.8	36.5
5 or more	1,074	1,040	446	434	14.7	53.3	32.1
Age							
18-24	998	802	389*	320	20.4	52.8	26.9
25-34	1,092	968	427	400	20.7	44.1	35.1
35-44	1,059	1,042	460	425	19.0	44.2	36.8
45-59	986	973	518	482	9.3	44.2	46.5
Total	1,052	968	438	400	19.1	46.0	34.9

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

proportion of respondents' income, are distributed within the demographic categories. This measure is imperfect, given the complexity of household composition and how income is shared among household members. It was selected to highlight respondents' reported use of *their* income. To create this measure, the amount of money that respondents reported spending monthly on rent and utilities was divided by the amount of monthly income they reported receiving from all sources for themselves and their children. This amount may or may not be

equal either to household income or housing costs because other adults may contribute both to household income and to housing costs. However, this number tells us the proportion of the respondents' own resources that go to housing costs and thus are not available to meet other expenses. Taken together, these three forms of data furnish complementary information on the area of housing costs as a hardship; in sum they offer a fuller view of people's circumstances.

Mean monthly income for all respondents was \$1,052; respondents' housing costs averaged \$438 a month. Overall then, respondents spent an average of 41.6 percent of their income on rent and utilities. For one-fifth (19.1%) of the sample, housing costs constituted less than one-quarter of their income. Almost half (46.0%) paid between a quarter and a half of their income toward housing costs, and one-third (34.9%) spent at least half of their income on housing.

The first panel presents findings by racial/ethnic group. Latino respondents had both the highest mean income and the greatest housing costs, followed in both categories by Whites. African American and Other respondents had the lowest incomes, while Vietnamese respondents reported spending the least on housing. There are no statistically significant differences across racial/ethnic groups, although Vietnamese study participants were more likely to have housing costs that made up a smaller percentage of their income and larger proportions of White and Latino respondents spent more than one-quarter of their income on rent.

Male respondents reported non-significant, slightly lower incomes and housing costs than females. Similarly, the differences between proportions of income spent on housing between male and female respondents were non-significant. Nevertheless, a greater proportion of male respondents spent at least half of their income on rent and utilities than did females. The proportion who spent less than one-fourth of their income on housing was similar for both genders.

The third panel compares respondents from one-parent and two-parent families. Monthly income for study participants in both groups was quite similar, but respondents from two-parent families reported spending significantly more on housing than did those from one-parent families. Thus, respondents from two-parent families tended to spend higher proportions of their income on

housing costs than did those from one-parent families. This pattern is reflected in the figures in the following three columns which show that the proportion of income spent on housing varied significantly by family structure. Only 8.2 percent of respondents from two-parent families spent less than a quarter of their income on rent and utilities, whereas more than half (55.1%) of the two-parent group spent at least half of their income on shelter costs. However, this finding may be related to how this hardship variable was created. Since this proportion includes neither income from other household members nor their contribution to housing costs, in the case of two-parent families, the proportion of income devoted to housing may be either greater or smaller than is the case among one-parent families where the respondent's income is more likely to represent all, or the bulk, of the household income and housing expenditures.

Neither respondents' average housing costs nor their mean monthly incomes were correlated with the number of people in their households. However, housing costs as a proportion of income vary significantly by household size. About one-fifth (21.7%) of respondents from smaller households spent less than a quarter of their income on housing compared to only 14.7 percent of respondents with five or more household members. More than half (53.3%) of respondents from larger households spent between one-quarter and one-half of their income on housing compared to 41.8 percent of those from households with four or fewer members. Similar proportions of both groups, 32.1 percent and 36.5 percent, spent at least half of their income on rent and utilities.

Mean income and housing costs and proportion of income spent on housing by age of respondent is presented in the final panel of Table III-1. While there is no discernible pattern in respondent income, housing costs are positively correlated with age. That is, as age increases so does the mean amount of money respondents spend on housing, from an average of \$389 for 18 -24 year olds to \$518 for 45 - 59 year olds. These mean figures foreshadow the patterns seen for proportion of income spent on housing in the next three columns. Although the differences do not reach the level of statistical significance, the general trend reflects the information seen in the first two columns. About one-fifth of respondents under the age of 45 spent under a quarter of their income on housing; that proportion declines by half for the oldest subgroup to 9.3 percent. At the other end of the scale, about one-quarter (26.9%) of the youngest subgroup paid at least

half of their income for housing, as did about one-third of the middle two subgroups and almost half (46.5%) of the oldest subgroup.

Table III-2 presents the proportion of respondents who reported that they were unable to pay their rent or utilities in full sometime in the past year. Overall, almost half of the sample (46.3%) reported this experience. The first panel of Table 2 shows that Vietnamese respondents rarely faced this hardship whereas much higher percentage of the other racial/ethnic groups were unable to pay their rent or utilities at some time in the past twelve months. More than half of white and Latino respondents had this experience, 58.2 and 57.1 percent respectively, as did half of African Americans (49.1%) and a slightly lower percentage of Others (42.6%). While there is some variation among the non-Vietnamese groups, these differences are not statistically significant; the considerable difference between the Vietnamese and other groups drives the level of significance seen for this analysis.

Almost half (47.4%) of female respondents reported not being able to pay the rent or utilities in the last year, compared to one-third of male respondents. This difference is marginally statistically significant. This pattern is related to that seen for family structure, shown in the next panel, as a disproportionate share of males compared to females reside in two-parent households. While slightly more than half (57.1%) of the male respondents are in one-parent families, 92.8 percent of the female respondents are in one-parent families and thus are single mothers. As the family structure panel shows, about one-third (32.7%) of two-parent families faced this hardship while almost half (47.8%) of one-parent families did.

Household size is not related to whether respondents reported being unable to pay their rent or utilities in the last year. Nor does age appear to be a factor in people's ability to meet rent and utility payments. With the exception of the 25-34 year old group, about half of all age groups experienced this hardship in the past year. The difference, however, is not significant.

Table III-2. Inability to Pay Rent and/or Utilities in the Last Year

Percent Unable to Pay Rent/Utilities	
Race/Ethnicity***	
African American	49.1
White	58.2
Latino	57.1
Vietnamese	6.4
Other	42.6
Gender⁺	
Male	33.3
Female	47.4
Family Structure*	
1 parent	47.8
2 parent	32.7
Household Size	
4 or less	46.9
5 or more	45.2
Age	
18-24	50.9
25-34	39.3
35-44	50.6
45-59	48.9
Total	46.3

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Table III-3 presents the proportion of respondents who live in crowded housing conditions. For the purposes of this report, crowding was defined as more than two persons per bedroom. Crowded living conditions have the potential to affect people’s ability to get sufficient rest and sleep, which, in turn, can affect health, energy levels and alertness, and ultimately, the ability to successfully pursue employment. Overall, just over one-fifth (21.8%) of all respondents lived in such conditions.

Table III-3. Crowded Living Conditions by Demographic Characteristics

Proportion with Crowded Conditions	
Race/Ethnicity**	
African American	18.6
White	11.9
Latino	35.4
Vietnamese	23.4
Other	33.8
Gender*	
Male	35.7
Female	20.5
Family Structure*	
1 parent	20.5
2 parent	32.7
Household Size***	
4 or less	9.8
5 or more	42.7
Age⁺	
18-24	30.0
25-34	22.0
35-44	17.1
45-59	17.8
Total	21.8

..... + p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

We found significant racial/ethnic differences for this particular hardship. Only 11.9 percent of Whites lived in crowded conditions, while a third of Latino and Other respondents, 35.4 and 33.8 percent respectively, experienced this hardship. African American and Vietnamese respondents fell in-between. A partial explanation for this pattern appears to lie in the differences in household size across the groups. Almost two-thirds (63.3%) of Latinos and half (53.2%) of Vietnamese live in households with five or more members. However, household size does not explain the high percentage of Other respondents who lived in crowded housing as only 39.7 percent lived in households with at least five members.

As was the case for the inability to pay housing costs, there appears to be a relationship between the crowding patterns seen across gender and those across family structure, presented in the next two panels. Males, who are more likely to live in two-parent households, were significantly more likely to live in crowded conditions. Taken from the family structure perspective, respondents from two-parent families, who are more likely to be male than female, had significantly higher proportions of household crowding than did respondents from one-parent families. We suspect that both findings stem from the fact that two-parent families have one more adult, by definition, than similar one-parent families. However, adding another parent to the household is not correlated with a larger dwelling space.

In fact, household size is related to crowded housing conditions. While only one in ten (9.8%) respondents from households with four or fewer members lived in crowded conditions, 42.7 percent of those in larger households lived in such circumstances. Interestingly, while total household size is correlated with crowding, number of children is not. Respondents with no¹ or one child in the household were not less likely to live in crowded housing than were those with four or more children (not presented tabularly).

Respondent's age is slightly correlated with household crowding, the incidence of which declines with age. Three in ten 18-24 year-old respondents lived in crowded conditions, as did 22.0 percent of 25-34 year olds and about 17 percent of older respondents. This pattern is not due to household size as older respondents were no more or less likely to live in large households than were younger respondents.

Hunger

Table III-4 presents levels of food security during the last year by race/ethnicity, gender, family structure and age. For the sample as a whole, 59.4 percent did not experience hunger, one-quarter (26.6%) reported a lower quality diet due to the inability to pay for food, and 14.4 percent experienced moderate or severe hunger in the past year. None of the cross-tabulations were statistically significant, but some interesting patterns emerged nevertheless.

¹Some respondents' children were not living with them at the time of the interview.

Table III-4. Levels of Hunger by Demographic Characteristics

	Level of Hunger		
	Not hungry	Reduced diet quality	Moderate or severe hunger
Race/Ethnicity			
African American	62.3	24.9	12.8
White	47.7	32.8	19.4
Latino	49.0	32.7	18.4
Vietnamese	68.1	21.3	10.6
Other	60.3	23.5	16.2
Gender			
Male	71.4	16.7	11.9
Female	58.3	27.0	14.7
Family Structure			
1 parent	58.9	26.5	14.5
2 parent	63.5	23.1	13.4
Household Size			
4 or less	56.1	29.1	14.7
5 or more	65.1	21.0	14.0
Age			
18-24	67.3	24.5	8.2
25-34	61.3	24.6	14.1
35-44	54.8	28.9	16.2
45-59	48.8	26.7	24.5
Total	59.4	26.2	14.4

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Whites and Latinos were the most likely to experience moderate or severe hunger, followed by Others. Vietnamese respondents experienced hunger least often. Although the difference is not significant, males were less likely to have experienced reduced diet quality or hunger than were females. Respondents from one- and two-parent families do not differ in the proportions that experienced reduced diet quality or hunger. Similarly, respondents from smaller and larger households are equally likely to report experiencing moderate or severe hunger in the past year (14.7% vs. 14.0%). Respondents with four or fewer household members have higher rates of reduced diet quality and thus lower rates of no hunger problems than those from households with

five or more members, but the difference is not significant.

Although there is not a significant correlation, higher percentages of each age group experienced greater hunger than the group immediately younger. Whereas only 8.2 percent of 18- 24 year olds reported moderate or severe hunger, that figure climbed to 14.1 percent of 25-34 year olds, 16.2 percent of 35-44 year-olds and to one-quarter (24.5%) of 44-59 year-olds.

Clothing Needs

A third primary need is clothing. In the interview, respondents were asked if they needed help getting free or inexpensive work clothing for themselves, school clothing for their children and cold weather clothing for themselves or their families in the last twelve months. Those who needed help in any of these areas were asked if they received the help they needed. Table III-5 presents patterns in clothing needs across the four basic demographic factors.

Overall, 59.4 percent of respondents did not need any help in these areas. Of the 40.6 percent of respondents who needed such help, about one-fifth (21.7%) received the help they needed. (The figures in this final column are calculated by dividing the percentage of people who needed and received help (column 2) by the sum of those who needed help (columns 2 and 3).) There are no stark patterns within any of the demographic characteristics presented. Three-quarters (74.5%) of Vietnamese respondents needed no assistance with clothing; the proportion not needing assistance ranged from 54.4 percent to 61.2 percent for other groups. Among those who needed help, Vietnamese and Other respondents were most likely to receive the help they needed. One-third of each group (33.3% and 32.2% respectively) who needed assistance were able to get help. African Americans who needed help were the least likely to find a source of aid.

Table III-5. Clothing Needs by Demographic Characteristics

	Level of Need			Proportion Who Received Needed Help
	No Help Needed	Help Needed		
		Received	Not Received	
Race/Ethnicity				
African American	58.4	6.4	35.2	15.4
White	61.2	10.4	28.4	26.8
Latino	55.1	12.2	32.7	27.2
Vietnamese	74.5	8.5	17.0	33.3
Other	54.4	14.7	30.9	32.2
Gender				
Male	59.5	7.1	33.3	17.6
Female	59.4	8.9	31.7	21.9
Family Structure				
1 parent	58.0	9.1	32.8	21.7
2 parent	71.2	5.8	23.1	20.1
Household Size				
4 or less	58.6	8.0	33.4	19.3
5 or more	60.8	10.2	29.0	26.0
Age⁺				
18-24	68.2	6.4	25.5	20.1
25-34	51.8	10.5	37.7	21.8
35-44	59.6	7.8	32.5	19.4
45-59	68.9	11.1	20.0	35.7
Total	59.4	8.8	31.8	21.7

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Male and female respondents were equally likely to need help with clothing although a slightly higher percentage of females who needed help received it. Respondents from two-parent families were less likely to need clothing aid than those from one-parent families, but among those who did need aid, those from one-parent families were just as likely to obtain assistance as other respondents. Almost identical proportions of respondents from small and large households needed help, although those from larger households were slightly more likely to get the

assistance they needed. Respondents' age is not associated with whether they report needing assistance in obtaining free or inexpensive clothing. In fact, one-third of both the oldest and youngest group reported this need (31.8% and 31.1%, respectively) compared to higher proportions among the two middle age groups. Among those who needed help, about one-fifth of those under age 45 reported receiving the help they needed; more than one-third (35.7%) of those in the oldest group were able to find assistance.

As one might expect, barriers and hardships are correlated with each other. People with more barriers were more likely to have a high number of daily hardships and vice versa. It is not possible to ascertain the direction of this correlation. Since hardships, as defined here, result from insufficient income, it is possible that they are the consequences of barriers which hamper people's ability to work, or to work at sufficient hours and sufficient wages to permit them to afford basic necessities. On the other hand, daily hardships may be precursors to some or all of the barriers that make it difficult for people to work. In fact, both possibilities may be true simultaneously. A third possibility is that both hardships and barriers to work are the outcomes of similar or identical factors in people's lives or life histories.

Regardless of the reasons for the correlation between barriers and hardships, learning more about the form this correlation takes sheds some light on the situations of CalWORKs recipients. Only 1.4 percent of the sample reported both none of the five barriers found to be associated with working in Section 2 of this report and none of the hardships described in this section. On the other end of the scale, only 1.6 percent reported both three or more barriers and three or more hardships. Table III-6 presents the association between hardships and barriers from two directions. First, the distribution of hardships among people with zero, one to two and three or more barriers is shown. Second, the distribution of barriers among people with zero, one to two and three or more hardships is presented.

Table III-6. Association between Barriers to Working and Daily Hardships

Number of Hardships				
Number of Barriers	0	1 - 2	3 or more	Total
0 (7.6%)	17.9	61.5	20.5	99.9
1 - 2 (64.8%)	24.7	59.3	16.0	100.0
3 or more (27.5%)	7.8	68.1	24.1	100.0

Number of Barriers				
Number of Hardships	0	1 - 2	3 or more	Total
0 (19.5%)	7.0	82.0	3.0	100.0
1 - 2 (61.5%)	7.6	62.1	30.3	100.0
3 or more (20.5%)	8.4	55.8	35.8	100.0

The figures in Table III-6 suggest that while people with more barriers do not necessarily have more hardships (top panel), those with more hardships have more barriers (bottom panel). While only 3.0 percent of respondents with no hardships had three or more barriers, that proportion rose to 30.3 percent of those with one or two hardships and 35.8 percent of those with three or more hardships.

Summary

It is difficult to find patterns in the tables presented and described above, in that no particular demographic characteristic seems to be more strongly associated with various hardships than any other. However, these analyses do suggest that daily hardships are omnipresent in the lives of the respondents, regardless of their age, gender, or race/ethnicity. More than one-third of all respondents spent at least half of their incomes on housing costs, and almost half of the sample was unable to pay rent or utilities sometime in the past year. One-fifth lived in crowded conditions at the time of the survey. One-quarter experienced a reduced quality of diet because of lack of funds to buy food, and 14.4 percent experienced hunger for this reason. Four in ten needed help to obtain clothing for themselves or their children. These figures suggest that welfare recipients are dealing with a variety of material stresses in their daily lives.

Four out of five (80.5%) respondents suffered at least one of the five hardships discussed above. Almost half (46.2%) were dealing with at least two hardships and 18.5 percent faced three or more. Table III-7 shows the distribution of hardships across demographic categories and between working and non-working respondents. Vietnamese respondents reported the fewest number of hardships, almost half (46.8%) reported none. Latinos reported the highest number of hardships, with 28.5 percent reporting at least three. There were no significant gender or age differences in the number of hardships reported, nor was family structure associated with hardship level. Respondents from larger households suffered a greater number of hardships than those from smaller households. Not surprisingly, about one-quarter (26.9%) of those working 26 hours or more weekly had no hardships, compared to only 16.9 percent of those working fewer than 26 hours.

The relationship between people's welfare and work situations can be safely said to be tied to the number and type of hardships in their daily lives. This relationship is bound to be complicated and bidirectional. People with more, and more severe, hardships may be less likely to be able to find and keep employment that improves their standard of living. On the other hand, people who do find jobs that increase their net incomes may experience a decline in the number and severity of hardships.

Leaving welfare, however, is not synonymous with a gain in income. Some studies of welfare leavers suggest that this may not be the case and that many people who have left welfare continue to face economic hardships. A three-state study found that a third of welfare leavers had problems providing enough food for their families and/or paying their rent or utility bills (Brauner & Loprest, 1999). One study found that former welfare recipients were more likely to have problems paying rent or affording food than when they were receiving cash assistance (Primus, Rawlings, Larin & Porter, 1999). Another study found extremely high poverty rates among welfare leavers (Cancian, Haveman, Meyer & Wolfe, 2000). A second wave of data on the Alameda County respondents will shed more light on the relationships between hardships people face in their daily lives and their likelihood of successfully moving from welfare to work for people in Alameda County.

Table III-7. Number of Hardships by Demographic Characteristics and Work Status

	0 Hardships	1-2 Hardships	≥3 Hardships	Mean Number of Hardships
Race/Ethnicity**				
African American	17.4	65.8	16.7	1.49***
White	16.4	62.7	20.9	1.52
Latino	14.3	57.1	28.5	1.80
Vietnamese	46.8	42.5	10.6	.85
Other	16.2	61.8	22.0	1.63
Gender				
Male	23.8	52.4	23.8	1.55
Female	19.1	62.8	18.1	1.48
Age				
18-24	18.2	69.1	12.7	1.41
25-34	18.8	64.4	16.7	1.48
35-44	19.3	58.4	22.3	1.52
45-59	26.7	46.6	26.6	1.56
Family Structure				
2 parent	21.2	53.9	25.0	1.54
1 parent	19.3	62.9	17.9	1.48
Household Size⁺				
4 or less	22.1	61.6	16.2	1.40*
5 or more	15.1	62.4	22.6	1.62
Working*				
26 hours or more	26.9	57.5	15.6	1.34 ⁺
25 hours or less	16.9	63.5	19.6	1.54
Total	19.5	61.9	18.5	1.48

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

References

Brauner, S. and Loprest, P. (1999). *Where Are They Now? What States' Studies of People Who Left Welfare Tell Us*. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

Cancian, M., Haveman, R., Meyer, D.R. and Wolfe, B. (2000). *Before and After TANF: The Economic Well-being of Women Leaving Welfare*. Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Madison. SR. 77.

Primus, W., Rawlings, L., Larin, K. and Porter, K. (1999). *The Initial Impact of Welfare Reform on the Incomes of Single-Mother Families*. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC.

Section IV. Progression through CalWORKS Activities

Survey respondents were asked a number of questions about their involvement in Alameda County's CalWORKs program. At the time that most people were interviewed, CalWORKs in Alameda County was in its early stages of implementation. Thus, most respondents had completed few of the steps the program involves. The first step in the process is to attend an orientation. Afterwards, people who have not been told that they are exempt from meeting CalWORKs work-related activities are required to register in the program. Their readiness to work, including their experience and work skills, are then appraised by a CalWORKs counselor. They are then assigned an employment counselor whose role is to assist them in preparing and looking for work. With their counselor, they develop a welfare-to-work plan which lays out the activities they agree to take to accomplish the goal of becoming employed.

The CalWORKs program steps are designed to be sequential; therefore the proportion of the cross-sectional sample that has completed each step is expected to be lower than the proportion who completed the previous step. This pattern exists for two reasons. First, the data for this report represent a snapshot in time, capturing people at whatever stage they are at when they are interviewed. Second, the sample was interviewed fairly soon after CalWORKs was first implemented in Alameda County. Thus, the respondents would be expected to remain early in the process. Another factor that probably accounts for smaller numbers at later CalWORKs steps is attrition. All welfare recipients have the option of participating in the CalWORKs program or leaving the program (and dropping from the TANF rolls) to find work or other ways of supporting themselves.

A further caveat to keep in mind while digesting and interpreting the findings in this section is that the numbers presented emanate from reports from the respondents and thus reflect their understanding of the CalWORKs process and of the terms used to describe the steps that comprise this process. It is probable that respondents' understanding of such terms as "registered", "assessed" and "appraised" differ from the official use of these terms. Thus, these results should be taken as a description of where in the process CalWORKs participants perceive themselves to be, which may or may not correspond completely with their actual status.

Table IV-1 presents the percentage of respondents at each stage of this process when they were interviewed. Just over two-thirds (68.2%) of the sample had attended a CalWORKs orientation by the time of the baseline interview. Of those, 12.6 percent reported they were told that they were at least temporarily exempt from CalWORKs work requirements. In addition, 10.5 percent of respondents who did not attend an orientation session reported being told that they were exempt from these requirements. In all, 11.9 percent of respondents were told they were exempt from working. School and physical disability were the most common reasons for exemptions. One-quarter (24.6%) of the 61 persons who said they were exempt from CalWORKs work requirements were exempt because they were full-time students; an equal proportion had a physical disability. Almost one-fifth (18.0%) were the primary caretaker of a disabled family member, and 14.8 percent were the primary caretaker of an infant. Another 13.1 percent said they were exempt due to pregnancy.

Almost six in ten respondents (57.5%) had registered in the CalWORKs welfare-to-work program. One-quarter (25.6%) of the sample reported that CalWORKs had assessed or appraised their work skills. One-quarter (25.4%) were also assigned an employment counselor. Overall, 14.7 percent were participating in job search or job club activities, and 18.8 percent had started developing a welfare-to-work plan with their employment counselor.

Table IV-1. Proportion of Respondents at Each Stage of CalWORKs Program

	% of Total Respondents
Attended a CalWORKs orientation	68.2
Registered in CalWORKs	57.5
Work readiness appraisal carried out	25.6
Assigned employment counselor	25.4
Participated in job search, job club	14.7
Developing welfare-to-work plan	18.8

Just over one-quarter (26.2%) of the sample was usually working twenty-six or more hours per week at the time of the interview. Table IV-2 examines the proportion of respondents working at

each of several key steps in the CalWORKs process. For each step, a higher proportion of the respondents who had gotten to that point in the CalWORKs process were working than those who had not advanced that far, but the difference is never significant. Among those who had attended a CalWORKs orientation by the time of the interview, 27.3 percent were working at least 26 hours per week. Of the proportion of the sample who had not attended an orientation session, 22.2 percent were working. A slightly higher fraction of respondents who had registered in CalWORKs were working than the proportion of those who had not registered (27.6% vs. 24.1%). The same is true for developing a welfare-to-work plan with an employment counselor. A greater proportion of respondents who had reached this step were working than among the group of respondents who had not (31.3% vs. 24.9%).

Table IV-2. Proportion of Respondents Working at Each Stage of CalWORKs

	% Working
Attended a CalWORKs orientation (n=348)	27.3
Registered in CalWORKs (n= 294)	27.6
Developing welfare-to-work plan (n= 96)	31.3
Overall proportion working (n= 512)	26.2

It is important to emphasize that it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the relationship between respondents' participation in CalWORKs and whether they are working. That is, we cannot determine if participating in CalWORKs is associated with a greater likelihood of working or whether working is associated with a greater likelihood of progressing through CalWORKs' phases. This is partially due to our lack of information on the relative timing of respondents' involvement in CalWORKs phases and work. Moreover, it is possible that there is no relationship between CalWORKs and working at this early stage of welfare reform.

We hypothesized that various demographic and background factors would be associated with people's involvement in CalWORKs and their progression through the steps that comprise the CalWORKs process. Few factors predicted respondent participation in CalWORKs. Age at first welfare receipt was an exception. Table IV-3 compares CalWORKs stage for respondents who were twenty years old or younger the first time they applied for welfare assistance versus for

those who were older at first receipt of assistance. Respondents who were 20 years old or younger the first time they applied for welfare assistance were significantly less likely to have attended a CalWORKs orientation than those who were in their twenties or older when they first received public assistance. About three-quarters (74.5%) of the older respondents had attended an orientation compared to 63.2 percent of younger respondents. However, this difference did not persist when subsequent steps of the CalWORKs process were examined. While only 53.9 percent of respondents who were younger at first welfare receipt went on to register in CalWORKs, 62.1 percent of those who were older did, a sizable but only marginally statistically significant difference. The difference between these two groups continues to narrow as their participation in further steps is measured. Thus, 17.5 percent of the younger entrants onto aid had started developing a welfare-to-work plan at the time they were interviewed, as had 20.4

Table IV-3. Proportion of Respondents at Each Stage of CalWORKs by Age at First Welfare Receipt

	≤ 20 years old	> 20 years old
Attended a CalWORKs orientation**	63.2	74.5
Registered in CalWORKs ⁺	53.9	62.1
Developing welfare-to-work plan	17.5	20.4

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

percent of older entrants. This pattern suggests that although respondents who were younger at the time they first received aid are less likely to take the required first step, they are just as likely to end up in the same place as other respondents. Conversely, older entrants may have a higher level of attrition as they progress through the CalWORKs stages, even though a greater percentage of them begin the program. This attrition, if it is confirmed at follow-up, remains to be assessed as evidence of positive outcomes – for those who have secured work – as opposed to potentially negative outcomes – program withdrawal despite lack of secure work.

Summary

These findings are quite preliminary, as they essentially represent a snapshot of people’s involvement in CalWORKs early in the implementation of welfare reform in Alameda County.

Because participation in CalWORKs is a process that unfolds over time, longitudinal data are essential to test most questions about participation in the program. To this end, the follow-up data, gathered fifteen months after the first interview, will shed more light on these issues. By the follow-up interview, respondents will have had more time to become involved in the various steps that comprise Alameda County's CalWORKs plan to prepare people for work. This will make it possible to learn more about what factors are associated with CalWORKs participation and how people progress from one stage to another. Related to this issue is the question of attrition. Additional data will prove helpful in determining at what steps in the process attrition is most likely to occur, whether departures from the CalWORKs program are associated with employment or not, and who is most likely to drop out along the way.

A second wave of data will help answer questions on the relationship between participation in CalWORKs and finding and keeping work. The primary question is whether, in fact, involvement in CalWORKs is associated with a greater likelihood of working and, if so, whether particular aspects of the CalWORKs program appear more essential than others. Related areas of interest are whether CalWORKs is more beneficial for some subgroups of respondents than for others. For example, it will be useful to better understand whether CalWORKs is more helpful to people who need relatively little help in making the transition from welfare to work and are positioned to take advantage of the services and assistance CalWORKs provides or to people who possess numerous, difficult barriers to finding and keeping work and would find the transition impossible without CalWORKs assistance.

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V. Work-related Activities

Considerable variety is evident across respondents in the number and type of work-related activities in which they were involved when they were interviewed. As noted first in Section II, 26.2 percent of the study participants were working 26 or more hours at that point. Table V-1 presents more detailed information on this group and the three-quarters of the sample who did not fall into the working category. We looked at whether respondents reported being in work-related training programs or in school and whether they were looking for work. The top panel (Summary) contains the number and percentage of respondents involved in various activities.

Some of these categories are overlapping because people could have been simultaneously involved in more than one activity. (Respondents in the No activities category do not appear in any other category. In addition, the two working categories are mutually exclusive.) Almost one-quarter (24.2%) of the sample was neither working, looking for work nor involved in school or a training program at the time of the interview. One-quarter (26.0%) were in training or school, 30.8 percent were looking for work and 12.9 percent were usually working, but working fewer than 26 hours per week.

The lower panel of Table V-1 presents this information in more detail by showing the proportion of respondents by the number and types of work-related activities in which they were involved. These categories are mutually exclusive. About one in ten (11.3%) were in training or school and no other activities; one in five (19.5%) were looking for work only. Another 5.8 percent were engaged in both activities. Almost one in twenty (4.7%) was working fewer than 26 hours per week only. Overall, 12.9 percent combined working with either training or looking for more work or both.

These numbers suggest great heterogeneity within the sample in terms of involvement in work and work-related activities at an early stage of CalWORKs. While one-quarter of the respondents were not engaged in any such activities, another quarter was working at least the minimum hours required by CalWORKs at the time, a quarter was working to upgrade their skills and knowledge and 30.8 percent were looking for work or additional work. Follow-up data will shed more light on whether people in training or looking for work were successful in finding employment and whether those yet to start the process of entering or re-entering the work force made progress.

Table V-1. Work-related Activities

	N	Percent
<i>Summary</i>		
No activities	124	24.2
In training or school	133	26.0
Looking for work	158	30.8
Working less than 26 hours	66	12.9
Working 26 hours or more	134	26.2
<i>Detail (Mutually Exclusive Categories)</i>		
No activities	124	24.2
In training or school only	58	11.3
Looking for work only	100	19.5
Working less than 26 hours only	24	4.7
Working 26 or more hours only	110	21.5
In training & looking for work only	30	5.8
In training & working only	38	7.4
Looking for work & working only	21	4.1
In training, looking for work & working	7	1.4

VI. Self-sufficiency

This report has focused on analyses of factors hypothesized to affect people's daily lives and their chances of *regularly working* a certain number of hours per week. For several reasons, the analyses were not taken further in attempting to measure or predict *self-sufficiency*, the purported goal of welfare reform. The first reason for stopping short of assessing self-sufficiency in the study sample is that the data were collected soon after CalWORKs was inaugurated. This means that few people would have had the time to move from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency. A second reason is that neither the federal government officials who designed and passed welfare reform into law, nor the state and local agencies assigned to implement the law have arrived at any level of agreement over the definition of self-sufficiency. This lack of

consensus reaches into the welfare community as well.

When the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, P.L. 104-193) of August 1996 ended welfare as an entitlement for needy families with dependent children, the law indicated that the goal for recipients was to become *self-sufficient* with regard to public assistance within a relatively short time. However, PRWORA failed to define the term, and therefore, there was little guidance for applying this expectation to policy research. Possibly, this reference to achieving self-sufficiency was a rhetorical tool to encourage passage of the legislation, by appealing to society's core values of rugged individualism and entrepreneurship. A report from the National Academy of Sciences, issued just prior to passage of PRWORA, entitled "New findings on Children, Families, and Economic Self-sufficiency" makes no attempt to clarify what the law might mean by this term (Board on Children and Families, 1995). Also, self-sufficiency has received scant mention so far in studies of the impacts of CalWORKs.

Policy-makers and researchers are wondering aloud what to make of this expectation. Perhaps, if self-sufficiency can be defined in a way conducive to measuring it, then studies can report differences in self-sufficiency both over time and among specific groups of interest. One tack is to work with the presumed opposite of self-sufficiency, dependence. Julia Issacs, with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (personal communication, February 22, 2000), reminded a group that "under the Welfare Indicators Act of 1994, DHHS is required to prepare annual reports to Congress on indicators and predictors of welfare dependence. One of the challenges of this endeavor is to find a definition of dependence. The first and second annual DHHS reports speak of the 'continuum' of welfare dependence, with variations in degree and duration. A bipartisan Advisory Board on Welfare Indicators that helped develop the first of the annual reports struggled with the difficulties inherent in defining and measuring dependence. They proposed the following definition as one way to measure it: 'A family is dependent on welfare if more than 50 percent of its total income in a one-year period comes from AFDC/TANF, food stamps and/or SSI, and this welfare income is not associated with work activities. Welfare dependence is the proportion of all families who are dependent on welfare.'"

This definition has several drawbacks. Axinn and Stern (1988) point out the multidimensionality of dependence, including age, source of income, and social usefulness of economic activity. They clarify the difficulty of collecting the data required to implement a more conceptually comprehensive definition of dependence. The arbitrary nature of the 50 percent cutoff presents another problem with trying to use this measure of welfare dependency as a proxy for self-sufficiency. The definition of “work activities” and the consistency of definitions across state and county agencies presents a third problem with this potential measure of self-sufficiency. Finally, as Sandfort and Hill (1996) explain, measures of dependency over-emphasize the discretionary powers of local and state governments to decide who does and does not qualify for welfare assistance.

Sandfort and Hill (1996) propose to define self-sufficiency as a continuum across two dimensions – source of income and amount of income. Amount of income (and household size) is used to define poverty, first established by the Social Security Administration in 1963. Critics contend that the established level has not kept up with changes in the costs of food and other necessities and fails to reflect the value of “non-cash” benefits such as Food Stamps and Medicaid (Rose, 2000). On the other hand, according to Rose (2000, p. 13), it is a “low budget” line, which is about 75 percent above the poverty line, that defines “a sense of self-respect and social participation,” two likely candidate constituent elements of self-sufficiency. Source of income indicates whether the income is earned for productive activities or provided by another person or organization based on level of need. They imply that each source of income should be identified and ranked or weighted, in relation to how much personal effort is expended in obtaining the income. For example, income from family members would be weighted less than one’s own earnings from a job. TANF benefits would be assigned the lowest weight.

Looking to the future, the general approach recommended by Sandfort and Hill (1996) is being developed by the Alameda County CalWORKs Study to define a provisional measure of self-sufficient monthly personal income. This measure is undergoing testing, and a report of its applicability will become available at a later date. The goal is to add this type of information to CalWORKs Study reports covering changes over time in personal statuses, following the collection of the second wave of data from the same respondents.

References

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VII. Conclusions

The results presented in this report address the issues of respondents' work status and well-being from several directions, including potential barriers to work, daily hardships, respondents' engagement in the CalWORKs program, and work-related activities. All the analyses are based on one wave of data early in the life of Alameda County's CalWORKs program and therefore should be interpreted only to apply to that point in history. On the other hand, the data and the analyses offer a rich and complex picture of the lives and possible futures of CalWORKs recipients at a crucial point in time and will serve as a baseline for future analyses that will examine changes in this picture over time.

The results of the analyses presented in Section II, Barriers to Working, suggest that several factors make it more difficult for people to find and keep work; it is thus less likely for people with these factors to be working. Respondents with child care and transportation barriers were much less likely to be working than those without these obstacles. Persons with few work skills faced similarly long odds of being employed when they were interviewed. In addition, those with a history of involvement in the criminal justice system were less likely to be employed. Respondents who regularly engaged in heavy drinking were marginally less likely to be working, as were those who had a child in the past year.

Several family-related factors appear to be related to the odds of working. Respondents with a preschooler at home as well as those with a teenager were more likely to be working than those without children in these age groups, regardless of the ages of their other children. This finding merits further examination to uncover the reasons for this particular pattern. Having a grandparent or other relative who provides child care greatly increased the chances that respondents were working. This is not surprising as many parents prefer to leave their children with family when they are working, and family child care is less expensive and often more convenient than center-based or other forms of care. On the other hand, none of the demographic characteristics tested were predictors of employment status, including race/ethnicity, sex, age, having a partner or spouse, or first language.

Hardships whose roots are lack of income appear to be widespread among this population. Sizable proportions of respondents had problems affording adequate housing, and enough quality food and clothing for themselves and their children. Moreover, level of hardship is associated with both number of barriers to work and with employment status. As the number of hardships respondents report increases, the proportion with a high number of barriers to working also increases, suggesting a close positive relationship between these two groups of factors. Conversely, people who are working are less likely to have hardships than people who are not working. This may mean that daily hardships are related to the odds of working; it may also mean that both hardships and working are associated with barriers in a way that will require further analyses to reveal.

These data were gathered early in the existence of CalWORKs in California and in Alameda County. Thus, it is risky to project that the figures representing individuals' involvement in CalWORKs will hold as time passes and the program becomes better established and understood by its clients. Nevertheless, two-thirds of respondents had taken the first steps towards becoming involved in the CalWORKs program and a fifth had developed a plan designed to guide them in finding work. We expect that the patterns will change over time. The second wave of interviews of the study sample will be useful in measuring change over time in work and other life patterns and in determining the direction and scope of these changes for this study group.

Preliminary analyses of work-related activities (training or school and job searching) suggest that CalWORKs recipients are a heterogeneous population, when grouped by the activities in which they were engaging. On the one hand, one-quarter was engaged neither in work nor in work-related activities, while another quarter was working at least 26 hours per week. Overall, four in ten respondents were working at least some hours. A sizable proportion of the sample was involved in more than one activity, such as going to school and working or working and looking for additional work. This pattern suggests that people are dealing both with meeting current needs and planning for a future that will not include reliance on public assistance.

In conclusion, this report contains a great deal of information, much of it descriptive and/or preliminary in nature. In addition, all analyses are based on one wave of data, and therefore it

was often unwise to draw conclusions about the direction of the apparent relationships between variables. Nevertheless, these analyses hint at a number of interesting patterns and relationships which await further examination when more data have been gathered and the existing data are subjected to more in-depth analyses. In the meantime, the results presented here offer numerous pieces of information on the lives and likely futures of individuals who have been caught up in the experiment of welfare reform.

Appendix A: Multivariate Analyses

Presented below are the full models used to generate the odds ratios for barriers to working that appear in the body of the report. Because the outcome variable is dichotomous (i.e., there are only two possible outcomes - regularly working 26 or more hours per week or not), logistic regression models were used for these analyses. The first test model included all barriers that were significantly associated with working at the bivariate level. Barriers that remained significant when other barriers were included were retained in subsequent models. Barriers that were both significant in the base multivariate model and significantly associated with another barrier were entered in the subsequent logistic regressions as the form of dummy variables which modeled the possibility of having either or both barriers (vs. neither of the barriers).

Table A-1 presents the odds ratios (OR) for the logistic regression model that includes all barriers that were significantly associated with regularly working 26 or more hours per week at the bivariate level. As this table shows, not all barriers remained significantly associated with this outcome when that association was tested controlling for other barriers. For example, neither of the potential health barriers (heavy drinking and mental health symptoms) remained significant. Respondents who reported heavy drinking at least once a month in the past year had a lower likelihood of working than those who did not (OR = 0.52), but that difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, respondents with many mental health symptoms were not significantly less likely to be working than those with a lower number of symptoms (OR = 0.64) net of other barriers.

Only one of the human capital-related barriers remained significantly associated with working after controlling for other barriers. Respondents with neither a high school diploma nor a GED were not significantly less likely to be working than those with at least a high school education (OR = 0.67). Neither were those with a GED more or less likely to be working than other respondents (OR = 0.68).

Table A-1. Base Logistic Regression Model Predicting Working: Barrier Variables Only

Barrier	Odds Ratio
Heavy drinking (5 or more drinks at least monthly)	
Yes	0.52
No	1.00
Many mental health symptoms	
Yes	0.64
No	1.00
Educational attainment	
Less than high school	0.67
GED	0.68
High school (ref)	1.00
Some post-secondary education	0.62
Number of work skills (0-5)	
0-1 skill	0.35**
2-4 skills	0.48**
5 skills (ref)	1.00
Experienced family violence in past year	
Yes	0.60
No	1.00
Had a new child in the past year	
Yes	0.51 ⁺
No	1.00
Lacks driver's license and auto	
Yes	0.54**
No	1.00
Needs & cannot get night child care	
Yes	0.20***
No	1.00
Has adult felony conviction/in CJ system	
Yes	0.38*
No	1.00

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Number of key work skills was significantly related to working, but the relationship is not linear. That is, each additional skill did not increase the likelihood of working by a fixed amount. Respondents with zero or one skill were only 35 percent (OR = 0.35**) as likely to be working as those who reported possessing all five skills. Those with two to four skills were about half as likely to be working as those with all five skills (OR = 0.48**). The analyses also revealed no difference in the likelihood of working between the least skilled group of respondents and those in the middle category. In other words, respondents with two to four of these key skills were no more likely to be working than those with even fewer skills.

Of the family- and child-related variables that were significant at the bivariate level -- family violence in the past year and a new child in the past year -- only having a new baby in the past year remained significantly associated with working, net of other barriers. Respondents with a new child were only about half as likely to be working as other respondents (OR = 0.51⁺). This difference is only marginally significant, however.

Conversely, both logistics-related variables – transportation and child care – remained highly significant predictors of working after controlling for other barriers. Respondents who did not have both a driver’s license and access to an auto were only about half as likely to be working as those who had both (OR = 0.54**). Respondents who reported needing, but not able to find, child care in the evenings were only one-fifth as likely to be working as those who either needed such care and found it or did not need it (OR = 0.20***).

The final barrier included in the model, criminal history, also remained significantly correlated with the odds of working even after other barriers were held constant. Respondents with either an adult felony conviction or who were currently involved in the criminal justice system were less likely to be working than those without this barrier to surmount (OR = 0.38*).

The next table, Table A-2, presents an intermediate logistic regression model. Included in this model are all barriers that remained significantly related to working in Table A-1. In addition, barriers that are significantly correlated with each other and with working are included as well. Thus, this model includes dummy variables that combine criminal history and heavy drinking in

the last year, dummy variables that combine transportation and child care barriers, number of work skills and the birth of a child in the past year.

For both the combination barrier variables, respondents who faced neither barrier comprise the reference group. Respondents with one or both of the barriers were compared to this reference group. Relative to respondents with neither a criminal history barrier nor an alcohol abuse barrier, those with a criminal history barrier only were one-third as likely to be working (OR = 0.35*). However, having only a heavy drinking barrier does not significantly lower the odds of working relative to the reference group (OR = 0.55). Respondents with both barriers are much less likely to be working than those with neither barrier, but the statistical significance of the difference is marginal (OR = 0.16⁺).

Respondents with a transportation barrier only were about half as likely to be working as those with neither a child care nor a transportation barrier (OR = 0.53**). Child care barriers appeared even more difficult to surmount; respondents with such a barrier (but who had no transportation barrier) were only about one-quarter as likely to be working as those with neither barrier (OR = 0.26*). Furthermore, those with both barriers were particularly burdened, they were only 8 percent as likely to be working as those with neither barrier. This pattern suggests that people with both of these barriers find it nearly impossible to work at least 26 hours per week.

Respondents who had a new baby in the past year are still less likely to be working than those with no such event. As in Table A-1, the difference between the two groups is marginally significant.

Work skills continue to behave in the predicted direction, and the pattern is very similar to that seen in Table A-1. Respondents with no key skills or only one skill were one-third as likely to be working as those with all five of the key skills (OR = 0.34***). Those with two, three or four skills were half as likely to be working as those in the reference group (OR = 0.49**). Again, respondents in the middle skill category (2 - 4 skills) were no more likely to be working than those in the low skill category (0 -1 skill).

Table A-2. Intermediate Logistic Regression Model Predicting Working:
Single and Combination Barriers

Barrier	Odds Ratio
<i>Criminal History & Heavy Drinking Barriers</i>	
Neither (ref)	1.00
Criminal history only	0.35*
Heavy drinking only	0.55
Criminal history & heavy drinking	0.16 ⁺
<i>Transportation & Child Care Barriers</i>	
Neither (ref)	1.00
Transportation only	0.53**
Child care only	0.26*
Transportation & child care	0.08***
<i>Had a child in the past year</i>	
Yes	0.52 ⁺
No	1.00
<i>Number of Work Skills</i>	
0-1 skills	0.34***
2-4 skills	0.49**
5 skills (ref)	1.00

⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001

Table A-3 presents the findings from the final logistic regression model which includes the barriers as they were modeled in Table A-2 as well as a number of demographic and other factors. This model addresses two key issues. The first is whether the relationships seen between various barriers and working are actually due to demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, family structure, language, age or gender. The second is whether any of these demographic factors themselves emerge as significantly associated with working, net of the barriers which appear to be associated with whether people were working at the time of the interview.

The results of the final model suggest that holding demographic variables constant has small effects on the size or significance level of the odds ratios of the barriers that were evident in Table

A-2. Controlling for demographic factors has the greatest effect on the criminal history and heavy drinking combination variables, whose effect size and significance level increase somewhat. The results also suggest that, with few exceptions, demographic factors are not associated with the odds of regularly working 26 hours or more for the respondents in this survey.

Net of demographic characteristics, respondents with a criminal history only are only one-quarter as likely to be working as those with neither a criminal history nor an alcohol abuse problem (OR = 0.27**). These odds are somewhat lower than those prior to controlling demographic factors (Table A-2). A similar pattern is seen for respondents who are heavy drinkers but have no criminal history. Controlling for demographic factors lowers the odds of this group working, relative to the reference group, and raises the significance level (OR = 0.40⁺). Those with both barriers were only 10 percent as likely to be working as those with neither barrier (OR = 0.10*), a statistically significant difference.

Net of demographic factors, respondents with a transportation barrier are less than half as likely to be working as those with neither a transportation barrier nor a child care barrier (OR = 0.43**). Those with a child care barrier are just over one-fifth as likely to be working as the reference group (OR = 0.22*). Those with both barriers are only 6 percent as likely to be working as those with neither (OR = 0.06***). In all cases, the odds are somewhat lower than those displayed in Table A-2.

Respondents who had a child in the past year remain half as likely to be working as those who did not, net of other barriers and demographic factors (OR = 0.50⁺).

Controlling for demographic factors served to narrow the gap in the odds of working between respondents with fewer than two key skills and those with five skills; nevertheless the less skilled group is still only half as likely to be working as those in the most skilled group (OR = 0.46*). Similarly, those with two to four skills are half as likely to be working as those in the reference group (OR = 0.51*).

As mentioned above, while there are sizable differences in the odds of working across some demographic categories, most of these differences are not statistically significant. There are no

significant racial/ethnic differences in the likelihood of working, nor does age or gender predict the odds of being employed. English as a first language is not a factor in whether people were working. Likewise, respondents with a spouse or partner are no more or less likely to be working than those without.

Two family-related factors were significant in this model, however. Respondents who had a preschool-aged child in their household were more likely to be working than those with only older children at home (OR = 1.80*). Having a teenager in the household was also associated with a greater likelihood of working, if only marginally so (OR = 1.57⁺). In addition, respondents who reported having a child regularly cared for by a grandparent or other relative of the child (not including the child's parent or sibling) were significantly more likely to be working than those who either did not have this child care option at their disposal or did not need this kind of family support (OR = 1.90*).

Table A3. Full Logistic Regression Model Predicting Working:
Barriers & Demographic Factors

Barrier	Odds Ratio
<i>Criminal History & Heavy Drinking Barriers</i>	
Neither (ref)	1.00
Criminal history only	0.27**
Heavy drinking only	0.40 ⁺
Criminal history & heavy drinking	0.10*
<i>Transportation & Child Care Barriers</i>	
Neither (ref)	1.00
Transportation only	0.43**
Child care only	0.22*
Transportation & child care	0.06***
<i>Had a Child in Past Year</i>	
Yes	0.50 ⁺
No	1.00
<i>Number of Work Skills</i>	
0-1 skills	0.46*
2-4 skills	0.51**
5 skills (ref)	1.00
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
African American (ref)	1.00
White	1.59
Latino	1.57
Vietnamese	0.49
Other	0.59
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	0.50
Male (ref)	1.00
<i>Age</i>	
18 - 24	1.28
25 - 34 (ref)	1.00
35 - 44	1.27
45 - 59	1.68

<i>English is First Language</i>	
Yes	1.61
No	1.00
<i>Partner or Spouse</i>	
Yes	0.82
No (ref)	1.00
<i>Preschooler in Home (0 - 4 years)</i>	
Yes	1.80*
No (ref)	1.00
<i>Young Child in Home (5 -13 years)</i>	
Yes	1.17
No (ref)	1.00
<i>Teen in Home (14-17 years)</i>	
Yes	1.57 ⁺
No (ref)	1.00
<i>Grandparent/Other Relative Child Care</i>	
Yes	1.90*
No	1.00
⁺ p ≤ 0.1 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001	