



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation  
Office of Disability, Aging and Long-Term Care Policy

# **WELFARE MOTHERS AS POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES:**

## **A STATISTICAL PROFILE BASED ON NATIONAL SURVEY DATA**

February 1991

## **Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation**

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# **WELFARE MOTHERS AS POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES: A Statistical Profile Based on National Survey Data**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN PROGRAM**

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program was inaugurated in the Social Security Act of 1935 in order to help widows remain in the home to raise their children. In the intervening half-century, numerous social and demographic changes have combined to alter the nature of the program, and the characteristics of AFDC recipients have changed dramatically. Widows now comprise only a small minority of AFDC recipients, with only 1.8 percent of the children receiving AFDC being eligible because their fathers have died. Today, 52 percent have unmarried parents, and another 35 percent have divorced or separated parents. Thus, never-married mothers and divorced and separated mothers now constitute 85 percent of all recipients (Family Support Administration, 1990).

In addition, as the proportion of mothers who are employed has risen dramatically, the premise of a program designed to help some mothers stay home to raise their children at the taxpayer's expense, while other mothers juggle home and family, has come under scrutiny and attack. The law that was passed, the Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-45), represents a compromise between several viewpoints and marks a major change in the philosophy underlying the provision of welfare assistance to poor families with children in the United States.

## **PROVISIONS OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT ACT**

The Family Support Act makes numerous changes in the AFDC program and in the Child Support Enforcement program. The intent of these changes is that public assistance should be a means for helping parents move from welfare dependency to self-sufficiency, rather than a source of long-term support for indigent families. Self-sufficiency is to be attained through the paid employment of welfare parents, including those with young children, and through the establishment and enforcement of the child support obligations of absent parents.

The law creates a new program of education, training, and employment-related services for AFDC recipients, The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program, or JOBS. It extends Medicaid coverage and underwrites the cost of child care for one year for families that stop receiving AFDC because of increased earnings. The law bolsters the Child Support Enforcement program by requiring automatic withholding of child support from the wages of absent parents, use of state guidelines in making child support awards, and increases in the establishment of paternity. The law also compels all states to provide AFDC to low-income, two-parent families in which the principal wage earner is unemployed.

One component of the Family Support legislation requires an evaluation of the impact of the JOBS program. These evaluations are being funded by the Family Support Administration and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The evaluation contract was awarded to the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which has overall charge of designing and implementing the study. Child Trends is assisting MDRC by designing a related study of the impact of the JOBS program on the children and families of AFDC mothers.

## **A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF AFDC MOTHERS**

Both to inform this impact evaluation and to assist state and federal policy makers who are currently working to implement the complex provisions of the Family Support Act, Child Trends has conducted a related project to describe the characteristics of the AFDC population, using several different national survey data bases. This report focuses on the characteristics of welfare mothers that relate to their capabilities for entering and remaining in the paid labor force. A related report (Zill, Moore, Wolpow, & Stief, 1991) describes the life circumstances and development of children in welfare families. This project is funded by the Foundation for Child Development and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, DHHS.

Some characteristics of the welfare recipients are known on the basis of reports issued regularly by the Family Support Administration based on the AFDC Quality Control System (House Ways and Means Committee, 1990). Some insights have been gained from vivid word-portraits drawn by skilled journalists, based on their intimate knowledge of a small number of individuals and families (Sheehan, 1975; Auletta, 1982). Our knowledge has also been enhanced by analyses conducted by researchers across the country (e.g., Furstenberg et al., 1987; Duncan and Hoffman, 1990; Jencks and Edin, 1990a & b). However, inadequate use has been made of information on welfare clients that is available in nationally representative survey data bases. Government publications provide only a limited number of cross-tabulations on restricted sets of demographic variables, while academic researchers almost never make description the central focus of their research.

Opinions about the characteristics of AFDC recipients are common. Some hold that welfare mothers lack motivation and have negative attitudes about work. This perspective suggests that individuals are selected into welfare because of negative personal characteristics. Others argue that welfare recipients are victims of poverty, discrimination, poor economic opportunities, and a lack of work experience. This perspective frequently concludes that welfare recipients need education, job training, and supportive services. Although these are usually seen as opposing perspectives, it is possible that both views have some truth. We believe that the results presented here show AFDC recipients to be a disadvantaged yet a varied group. The heterogeneity of

the welfare population has received increasing recognition over the past decade; but the ways in which AFDC recipients differ from and are similar to mothers who are not recipients, and the implications of the differences and similarities for welfare-to-work programs have received little systematic attention.

To fill this gap, Child Trends has conducted descriptive analyses comparing AFDC recipients with other women on a wide variety of characteristics, including their educational attainment, aptitude or achievement level, vocational training, employment experience, attitudes about employment, physical or emotional disabilities, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and self-esteem. Comparison groups included: all mothers with children under 18; women in families below the poverty line that have not received welfare in the past year (poor, non-welfare mothers); women in families at or above the official poverty line (non-poor mothers); and women who have not (yet) had children (non-mothers).

The sources of the-survey data employed in these comparisons were: the National Integrated Quality Control System (QCS); the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY); the March 1988 Current Population Survey (CPS); the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health (NHIS-CH); and the National Survey of Children (NSC). These data bases are described in an appendix to this report.

# FINDINGS

## **A MAJORITY OF WELFARE FAMILIES BEGAN WITH A TEEN BIRTH**

As recognized for some time (Moore, 1978 a & b), a majority of welfare families are initiated by a birth to a teenager. (Table 2.)

- Fifty-nine percent of women who received AFDC payments in 1988 were 19 or younger at the birth of their first child.
- By contrast, 25 percent of non-poor mothers were teenagers when they gave birth for the first time.
- Only 13 percent of AFDC mothers were more than 23 years old when they had their first child, whereas 41 percent of non-poor mothers were 24 or older at their first birth.

A history of teen childbearing is also common among poor women with children who are not currently dependent on welfare.

- Fifty-one percent of women with children who were below the poverty line but had not received AFDC in 1988 had had their first child when they were 19 or younger.

It is not a random subset of young women who became mothers as teenagers. Although teenage sexual activity is widespread, the adolescent girls who go on to bear children are apt to be those who score low on achievement tests, are failing in school, may also have poorer relationships with their parents, and engage in other forms of problematic behavior (Abrahamse, Morrison, & Waite, 1988a & b; Elster, Ketterlinus, & Lamb, 1990; Elliott & Morse, 1989; Rosenbaum & Kandel, 1990; Moore & Snyder, 1990). They are also more likely to be from minority ethnic groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds (NCHS, 1990).

## **MORE THAN HALF OF ALL WELFARE CHILDREN WERE BORN OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE**

A history of unmarried childbearing is an increasingly common characteristics of welfare families.

- For 52 percent of all children who got AFDC payments in 1988, the basis for eligibility was that there was no marriage tie between the mother and father of the child.

- Fifteen years earlier, in 1973, the same was true of less than a third of AFDC children (House Ways and Means Committee, 1990, p. 579).

Unmarried childbearing is less common among poor families that are not welfare dependent, and much less common among non-poor families with children. (Table 2.)

- Whereas half of all women who got AFDC payments during 1988 reported that they had never been married to the biological father of their child, the same was true of only 17 percent of poor mothers who had not received AFDC during the year.
- Less than 5 percent of non-poor mothers had never been married to the father of their child.<sup>1</sup>

There is debate as to whether birth outside of marriage constitutes a risk factor for a child's development and wellbeing. There can be little doubt, though, that unmarried childbearing increases a family's risk of welfare dependence (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). This is especially true when the mother is a teenager (Adams, 1990).

## **MORE THAN A THIRD OF WELFARE CHILDREN ARE DEPENDENT BECAUSE OF THE BREAKUP OF THEIR PARENTS' MARRIAGE**

Marital disruption is another major cause of welfare receipt. Although children of divorce represent a shrinking portion of the population receiving AFDC, they still make up more than a third of the total caseload nationwide.

- For 35 percent of children who got AFDC payments in 1988, the basis for eligibility was the separation or divorce of the parents.
- Fifteen years earlier, nearly half of all AFDC dependents were children of separation or divorce (House Ways and Means Committee, 1990, p. 579).

Early childbearing is also implicated in this path to welfare receipt because couples who marry young are more prone than older couples to separate or divorce (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Cherlin, 1981, p. 18). Once separated, young single parents are less likely than older parents to have the education, work experience, and earning power to support children without the help of a partner, relatives, or the government.

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<sup>1</sup> In families where there were two or more children in the eligible range, one was chosen at random to be the reference child.

## **MOST WELFARE PARENTS ARE YOUNG, BUT FEW ARE STILL TEENAGERS**

Given the association between early childbearing and welfare dependence, and given that many parents leave the rolls as they get older, it is not surprising that most welfare mothers are relatively young. Poor mothers who do not receive AFDC in a given year also tend to be on the young side, but not as much so.

- Of the 3.2 million women who received AFDC payments during an average month in fiscal year 1987, 1.8 million or 57 percent were under 30 years of age. (Table 1.)
- About one million AFDC mothers, or 32 percent, were in their thirties.
- Another 360,000, or 11 percent, were 40 or older.

Although the majority of welfare mothers began their childbearing as teenagers, relatively few are teenagers at a given point in time.

- Only about 200,000, or 6 percent, of the women receiving AFDC in fiscal year 1987 were currently under 20, and only 1 percent were under age 18.

About 1 in 5 AFDC mothers has a youngest child who is 9 or older. About two-thirds of the women on AFDC have at least one child age 5 or younger. Until now these women have been exempt from work and training requirements. The Family Support Act has changed this by mandating education, training, or job search for mothers whose youngest child is aged 3-5. Given widespread interest in the consequences of this momentous change, children aged 3-5 will be the primary focus of the study of the impact of JOBS on children. About 750,000 women fall into this newly-eligible category.

## **A MAJORITY OF WELFARE MOTHERS ARE BLACK OR HISPANIC**

In fiscal year 1988, more than half of AFDC mothers were black or Hispanic, with 40 percent being black and 16 percent Hispanic. About 39 percent of AFDC mothers were non-Hispanic whites (Family Support Administration, 1990).

## **MOST WELFARE MOTHERS HAVE SMALL FAMILIES**

It is relatively rare for AFDC mothers to have very large families nowadays (Family Support Administration, 1990).

- In FY 1988, 43 percent of AFDC families had only one child, and another 31 percent had two children.

- Only 10 percent had 4 or more children.

## **EDUCATION LEVELS OF WELFARE MOTHERS ARE HIGHER THAN GENERALLY BELIEVED, BUT STILL COMPARATIVELY LOW**

Despite the fact that most welfare mothers began bearing children as teenagers, more than half have either finished high school or obtained a general equivalency certificate (GED). The exact proportion with a high school education or more varies somewhat across surveys,<sup>2</sup> but is consistently found to be over 50 percent. In the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health (NHIS-CH), for example, it was determined that:

- Among AFDC mothers with children under 18, 57 percent had completed high school or more. (Table 2.)
- Nearly 15 percent, or about one in 7, had some college-level training.

The results reflect the general increase in educational attainment in the U.S., especially among blacks (U.S. House of Representatives, 1989, p. 62).

Although the educational attainments of AFDC recipients are greater than generally believed, and higher than they were in the past, they are still substantially lower than those of other U.S. women. For example:

- In 1988, 88 percent of non-poor women with children had completed high school or more, and 44 percent had at least some college education.
- Twenty percent of non-poor mothers were college graduates, compared to less than 2 percent of AFDC mothers.

The educational attainments of welfare mothers are about the same as those of poor women with children who are not currently dependent on AFDC. The 1988 NHIS-CH found, for example, that:

- Nearly 59 percent of poor, non-AFDC mothers had completed high school, but only 15 percent had some college training.

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<sup>2</sup> The proportion of AFDC mothers who had completed high school or its equivalent was 52 percent in the March 1988 Current Population Survey (CPS), 57 percent in the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health (NHIS-CH), and 60 percent in the 1987 round of the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY). The variation across surveys may be due to differences in the extent to which women with GED certificates reported themselves as having completed high school, as well as to sampling differences.



### ***At Least Forty Percent Are In Need of More Schooling***

How many welfare mothers are in need of education in order to become "employable"? If we assume that a high school diploma or its equivalent is the minimum academic credential that most employers look for, then at least 40 percent of welfare mothers need additional schooling.

- Nearly a third of AFDC mothers have had one or more years of high school, but have not obtained a diploma or GED certificate.
- At least 10 percent more have had only a grade-school education and may thus require several years of schooling in order to complete high school or obtain an equivalency certificate.

These conclusions need several qualifications. First, the proportion of AFDC mothers who are in need of education could well be higher if we used demonstrated mastery of basic skills, rather than possession of high school credentials, as an employability criterion. Considerable numbers of American students graduate from high school without being able to write coherently or solve arithmetic word problems, as community college English and math instructors will attest. Moreover, as shown below, AFDC mothers tend to score quite low on tests of academic skills.

On the other hand, many of the women who have only a grade school education are recent immigrants from Latin American or Asian countries where educational opportunities are more limited than they are in the U.S. Hence, the years of schooling attained by these women may not be a good index of their academic potential, or of the skills and knowledge they have picked up outside the classroom. Some of them may be able to qualify for a diploma or GED certificate relatively rapidly.

A final point is that there are many jobs for which a high school education is not really required, even though employers may demand it as a screening device. These jobs tend to be low-paying ones that offer few fringe benefits, however.

### **THE PERFORMANCE OF WELFARE MOTHERS ON TESTS OF VERBAL AND MATH SKILLS IS WELL BELOW AVERAGE**

Whereas the average educational attainment of welfare mothers is higher than generally believed, their scores on tests of verbal and mathematical skills are distressingly low.

In 1980, a nationally representative sample of young women who were respondents in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth was tested on the Armed Forces Qualification Test, a set of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and math tests of the kind that are found in most general scholastic aptitude batteries or college admissions tests. Those who would go on to receive welfare assistance scored

significantly below other young women. Specifically, when the test scores were combined and scaled as done for IQ scores, with an overall mean set at 100 and an overall standard deviation of 15, then:

- Young women who were welfare mothers in 1987, when they were aged 22-30, had a mean test score of 86, nearly one full standard deviation below the mean for all women. (Table 4.)
- By contrast, the mean for non-poor mothers in the same age range was 99, slightly below the overall mean.<sup>3</sup> Women who had not (yet) had children in 1987 tended to be above average, with a mean score of 104.
- Mothers in families below the poverty line that had not received AFDC during the year had the same average score as the AFDC mothers.

### ***Nearly Half Score Below The Eighteenth Percentile***

There is a good deal of variation in test performance within the population of AFDC mothers. In the national study, the standard deviation of their test scores was 15, the same as the overall standard deviation. However, nearly half of the future AFDC mothers had scores below the 18th percentile<sup>4</sup> for all women, and only between a fifth and a quarter had average or above average scores.

- Forty-nine percent of the AFDC mothers had test scores that were below 85, i.e., more than one standard deviation below the overall mean.
- Less than one-quarter of the AFDC mothers achieved scores of 100 (the overall mean) or more.
- The test scores of AFDC mothers are such that most would not qualify for entrance into the U.S. Armed Forces.

### ***Low Test Scores Characterize Welfare Mothers In All Major Ethnic Groups***

Welfare and poverty status are associated with low test scores among black, Hispanic, and white women. However, both verbal and mathematical test scores are generally lower for blacks and Hispanics than for non-minority individuals, with a mean score of 79 for black AFDC mothers, 80 for Hispanic AFDC mothers, and 93 for white AFDC mothers.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the nature of the NLSY sample, women in it who already had children in 1987 were predominantly those who were early childbearers. These women tended to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than those who would go on to have their first children in their late twenties, thirties, or early forties.

<sup>4</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> percentile is the score that 82 percent of a nationally representative sample would exceed, while 18 percent of the sample would achieve equal or lower values.

Because of concerns about cultural bias in cognitive tests, alternative standard scores were computed that used as reference points the means and standard deviations for women in the appropriate racial or ethnic group. The revised scores show that white AFDC mothers are more deviant from the white mean than black or Hispanic mothers are from their respective means.

- In terms of test scores standardized within each ethnic group, black AFDC mothers had a mean score of 93, Hispanic mothers had a mean score of 91, and white AFDC mothers had a mean score of 88.

These within-group differences are at least partly due to the fact that a smaller proportion of white women (4 percent) than of Hispanic women (12 percent) or black women (20 percent) were receiving AFDC payments in the reference year.

### ***Achievement Test Scores of Welfare Mothers Overlap Most with Those of Women Working at Blue Collar Occupations***

Welfare mothers score lower on tests of verbal and mathematical skills than women who hold jobs in any of the major occupational categories. The average cognitive achievement scores for women varies according to the occupational class of the jobs they hold. The mean scores range from 91 for manual operatives and 95 for household workers and crafts and construction workers up to 105 for management and administrative workers and 108 for holders of professional and technical positions.<sup>5</sup> (Table 5.)

- The average aptitude or achievement test score of welfare mothers is significantly below the mean of even the lowest of the occupational classes.

As might be expected, however, there is a good deal of overlap between the distribution of test scores achieved by welfare mothers and the range of scores for women in some occupations. The degree of overlap depends on the specific occupational class. For example:

- The proportion of AFDC mothers who had test scores that fell within or above the central range<sup>6</sup> for women who worked as manual operatives was 69 percent. For service occupations, it was 60 percent.

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<sup>5</sup> Women in the NLSY sample (including AFDC recipients) who had employment experience were classified according to the occupational class of their current or most recent job (as of the 1987 survey). The major categories of the 1970 Census occupational classification system were used, with slight modifications. This resulted in the women's jobs being divided into eight categories: manual operatives; household workers; crafts and construction workers; service occupations; clerical and secretarial; sales workers; management and administrative positions; and professional and technical occupations. See notes to Table 2 for examples of these occupational classes.

<sup>6</sup> The central range was defined to encompass those scores that fell within plus or minus one standard deviation of the mean of test scores for each occupational category.

- By contrast, 45 percent of AFDC mothers had scores that were within or above the range for women who worked at clerical and secretarial jobs, and only 29 percent were within the range for professional and technical occupations.

These proportions may be thought of as the proportion of AFDC mothers who "qualify" for a given type of job, based on their combined verbal and mathematical test scores. Interestingly, whereas sizable numbers of welfare mothers have some employment experience (see below), very few have held the kinds of blue collar jobs for which they seem most "suited" (using test scores as the sole criterion of suitability).

## **MOST WOMEN WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE, BUT MOST WELFARE MOTHERS ARE NOT**

One of the changes introduced by the Family Support Act is the requirement that welfare mothers with children as young as 3 years participate in job search or educational activities. Some critics have argued that it would be better to let women with children this young remain at home with their children. On this point, the national survey data show that it is not out-of-the-ordinary for women with preschool-aged children to be in the labor force nowadays. Indeed, a majority of these women are working outside the home.

- In March 1988, 59 percent of all women with children aged 3-5, and 65 percent of non-poor mothers, were working or looking for work. Thirty-eight percent of all women with children in this age range were working full-time, as were 45 percent of non-poor mothers. (Table 6.)
- In contrast, 29 percent of welfare mothers with children aged 3-5 were working or looking for work, and only 8 percent were employed full-time.

Thus, demanding that welfare mothers with young children get a job or take part in vocational training can in some sense be viewed as moving them into the mainstream. Given the low pay scales of the jobs for which most welfare mothers are qualified; however, even full-time work is not likely to raise their families above the poverty threshold. In any event, it is certainly legitimate to ask whether it is preferable from the child's perspective to have the mother at home or working at a low-wage job, and also to raise questions about the quality of the substitute care that the child will receive when the mother is working or in training.

## **MOST WELFARE MOTHERS HAVE HAD LITTLE WORK EXPERIENCE**

As would be expected, most welfare mothers are not currently employed, or at least most report that they are not working. National surveys find that between one-fifth and one-quarter of all women who have received AFDC payments during the past year are employed at the time of the survey, and 10-12 percent more say they are looking for

work. Thus, a third or more are in the labor force at any given time. Even more report having done some paid work or searching for work over the course of a year.

- More than 43 percent of U.S. women who received AFDC payments in 1987 also did some paid work (34 percent) or looked for work (9 percent) during that year. (Table 7.)
- Less than 20 percent did any full-time work, though, and only 4 percent reported working full-time throughout the year.

Given the low monthly amounts paid by AFDC in most states, some analysts believe that many welfare mothers must be working "on the side" or engaging in other remunerative activities, be they legal or illegal, just to make ends meet. In a recent study by Kathryn Edin of Northwestern University, the income and expenditures of 25 welfare families in a single Midwestern city were studied in depth (Jencks & Edin, 1990a & b). The findings suggest that unreported employment and illegal earnings are indeed widespread, though one should be cautious about generalizing from this small study to the welfare population as a whole.

The NLSY used traditional survey methods, but re-contacted respondents annually over a decade. It found that the majority of women aged 22-30 who received welfare payments in 1987 reported some work experience over the previous five years, but not much. The mean number of weeks worked by the welfare mothers was 59 out of a possible 260 weeks. (Table 8.)

- About 57 percent of the welfare mothers in the NLSY had worked less than a year in the last five years, and 27 percent had not worked at all during that period.
- On the other hand, 20 percent of the welfare mothers had worked for the equivalent of 2 years or more during the previous half-decade.
- By comparison, 43 percent of poor, non-AFDC mothers had worked 2 years or more, as had 71 percent of the non-poor mothers, and 90 percent of the non-mothers.

### ***One in Six Has Had Vocational Training***

Among the mothers receiving AFDC in the NLSY data base, about one in six -- 17 percent -- reported getting vocational training during one or more of the preceding five years. This compares with 11 percent of poor, non-AFDC mothers, 4 percent of non-poor mothers, and 5 percent of women aged 22-30 who were not yet mothers. (Table 8.)

## **ONE-THIRD OF WELFARE MOTHERS HAVE NEGATIVE VIEWS ABOUT MOTHERS WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME**

How do welfare mothers feel about the prospect of working for pay outside the home? When AFDC mothers are asked whether they agree or disagree with statements such as: "A woman's place is in the home;" or "A working wife feels more useful;" or "Women are happier in traditional roles;" a majority come down on the side of the traditional homemaker role. Only about a third seem to have strongly negative feelings about working, however.

- Among women aged 22-30 who received AFDC payments in 1987, 32 percent held negative attitudes about women with children being employed outside the home, and another 29 percent had views that leaned toward the traditional orientation.
- About a fifth of the AFDC mothers had attitudes that were clearly favorable to the possibility of mothers working, with another 19 percent leaning in that direction. (Table 9.)

Poor, non-AFDC mothers show a similar distribution of attitudes, even though, as a group, they are more likely to be employed regularly or to have been so in the recent past. The majority of non-poor women who have become mothers in their twenties also endorse or lean toward endorsing the homemaker role, though less so than welfare or non-welfare poor mothers. The majority of women in their twenties who are not yet mothers endorse or lean towards acceptance of maternal employment and other non-traditional roles for women.

In sum, although the evidence regarding sex role attitudes indicates that a substantial minority of welfare mothers have reservations about paid employment, two-thirds seem at least open to considering the possibility.

## **WHEN THEY DO WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME/ WELFARE MOTHERS TEND TO BE EMPLOYED IN SERVICE JOBS**

When they do enter the labor force, the kinds of jobs welfare mothers work at tend to be largely in the service sector, meaning jobs such as counter workers in fast food chains, janitorial workers, and the like. Many of these jobs have low salary levels and minimal fringe benefits. Sales and clerical jobs are the second- and third-most common types of jobs at which welfare mothers work, and light factory work ranks fourth in frequency.

- In 1988, among women who received AFDC at some point during the last year, and who were employed during the previous two weeks, 41 percent worked at service occupations. By contrast, only 13 percent of employed non-poor mothers worked at service jobs. (Table 10.)

- Nearly 16 percent of the AFDC mothers worked at sales jobs, and 15 percent at clerical and administrative support occupations. The fraction working at sales jobs was somewhat higher than the proportion among non-poor mothers -- 11 percent, whereas the fraction working at clerical jobs was only about half that among non-poor mothers -- 29 percent.

Not surprisingly, given their relatively low levels of educational attainment and academic skills, welfare mothers are much less likely than non-poor mothers to be working in managerial and executive positions, and at professional and technical jobs. Less than one in ten employed AFDC mothers works at one of these higher-level white-collar jobs. Also not startling is the finding that AFDC mothers are more likely than non-poor mothers to be working as unskilled helpers and laborers, and as private household service workers. However, some may find it surprising that so few welfare mothers work at these kinds of jobs.

- Only 4 percent of the employed AFDC mothers surveyed in 1988 reported working as helpers and laborers, and less than 3 percent reported working as cleaning ladies, baby sitters, or other household service workers.

It is possible, of course, that much of this type of work is done "off the books," and hence is not reported to survey interviewers.

Also noteworthy are the small numbers of AFDC mothers who work at the kinds of blue-collar jobs that tend to be better paying and are more likely to offer significant employee benefits. These include skilled production work, craft and repair jobs, and truck-driving and transportation occupations. These are, of course, "non-traditional" jobs for women and are not common among employed mothers in general.

- Only two percent of employed AFDC mothers surveyed in 1988 worked in precision production, craft and repair occupations, and less than one-and-a-half percent worked in transportation and material moving.

### ***Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers Are More Likely To Work In Factory Jobs and Farming***

The occupational profile for employed mothers who now receive or have recently received AFDC (as of the survey date) is quite similar to that for employed poor mothers who have not received AFDC within the last year. One noteworthy difference is that poor non-AFDC mothers are more likely to be working in factory jobs, and somewhat less likely than AFDC mothers to be working in service jobs and low-level sales and clerical positions. Non-AFDC poor mothers are also more likely to be in farming and outdoor occupations, reflecting the more rural character of the non-AFDC poor population.

- Just over 15 percent of employed poor, non-AFDC mothers surveyed in 1988 were working as machine operators and assemblers, compared to 9 percent of AFDC mothers.
- Nearly 3 percent of employed poor, non-AFDC mothers were working in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations, compared with less than one percent of AFDC mothers.

## **ALMOST HALF OF WELFARE MOTHERS ARE LONG-TERM RECIPIENTS**

Although the majority of women who get any AFDC benefits do so for only a limited time, nearly half receive benefits over extended periods.

- Among women aged 22-30 in 1987 who had gotten welfare at some point during the 12 months preceding the survey date, 46 percent qualified as long-term recipients. That is, they had received AFDC during more than three of the preceding five years. (Table 8.)
- One-third of the women who got AFDC at some point during the preceding 12 months had received benefits for between a year and three years, and about a fifth more had received benefits for a year or less.
- Among the currently poor mothers who were not on welfare during 1987, 31 percent had received AFDC for some period during the previous five years. The same was true of 10 percent of mothers who were not in poverty during 1987. A total of 13 percent of all U.S. women aged 22-30 had received welfare for some time during the preceding five years.
- Long-term recipients made up about one-third of all women who had received welfare at any time in the last five years.

As might be expected, the characteristics of long-term welfare recipients are quite different than those of women who receive welfare for relatively short periods of time. The differences are described in a later section of this report.

## **NEARLY ONE-FIFTH OF THE WOMEN RECEIVING AFDC HAS A HEALTH LIMITATION**

There are at least two contrasting reasons why mothers who receive welfare assistance might be expected to be in somewhat worse health than mothers in middle-income families. One is that low-education, low-income women live in circumstances that put them at greater risk of illness or injury than women in more affluent families.



Women from disadvantaged backgrounds are also more apt than middle-class women to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as smoking. At the same time, they are less likely than middle-class women to get high-quality medical care.

A different line of reasoning is that women with pre-existing chronic disorders -- physical or psychological -- might be more prone to be on welfare because their conditions interfere with steady employment and career advancement. The conditions would have to be ones that are relatively ambiguous or not especially severe, though, because having a clear-cut, medically determined physical or mental impairment can qualify the woman for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These benefits are a good deal more generous than those received under the AFDC program (U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, 1990, pp. 669-702).

Analyses of earlier national data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (Adler, 1988) gave evidence that AFDC mothers do have a relatively high prevalence of health problems, especially back conditions. In line with the earlier findings, data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey show that welfare mothers are significantly less likely than other mothers to be in top physical condition and more likely to have a health condition that limits their employment possibilities.

- AFDC mothers surveyed in 1988 were about half as likely as non-poor mothers to rate themselves in "excellent" health -- 21 percent to 38 percent. The AFDC mothers were four times as likely -- 20 percent versus 5 percent -- to rate their health as "fair" or "poor."<sup>7</sup> (Table 11.)
- AFDC mothers were more than twice as prone as non-poor mothers -- 18 percent to 7 percent -- to report having a condition that made it difficult for them to work at certain kinds of jobs.
- AFDC mothers were nearly twice as likely as non-poor mothers -- 20 percent versus 11 percent -- to have spent 8 or more days laid up in bed in the last 12 months due to illness or injury.

The health status of welfare mothers is quite similar to that of poor mothers who have not received AFDC recently.

- Among poor non-AFDC mothers surveyed in 1988, 17 percent were in fair or poor health; 15 percent had a health-related activity limitation; and 17 percent had 8 or more bed-disability days in the previous 12 months.

Despite the higher prevalence of health problems among welfare mothers, it is worth noting that four out of five welfare mothers are in good health, with no obvious

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<sup>7</sup> Although respondents' ratings of their own health are obviously not the same as a physician's appraisal, they have been found to be reasonably good indicators of general health status, and predictive of future use of medical care and other "hard" criteria.

medical conditions that would constrain their ability to work at household chores or paid jobs.

## **ONE IN FOUR WELFARE MOTHERS REPORTS ALCOHOL-RELATED PROBLEMS**

There has been a good deal of speculation about possible links between welfare dependency and alcohol or drug abuse, but there is a dearth of reliable evidence about the extent of substance abuse in the welfare population. Regrettably, the major household survey on substance use and abuse, sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), is not informative because it does not include questions that would permit the identification of AFDC recipients. Although there is some information on self-reported alcohol problems and drug abuse among welfare mothers in the NLSY data base, the questions are limited in scope. Moreover, under-reporting of drug use is always an issue in self-report surveys (Mensch & Kandel, 1988). Thus, the NLSY evidence has to be treated as suggestive, but not definitive.

What the NLSY data show is that alcohol-related problems were reported by more than a quarter of women aged 22-30 who received AFDC payments in 1987. The reports dated from 1985, which was when the series of questions about drinking and drug use was asked. (Table 12.)

- The proportion of AFDC mothers reporting one or more alcohol-related problems -- 26 percent -- was twice the proportion reported by non-poor mothers -- 12 percent -- and significantly higher than the proportion among poor mothers who had not received AFDC -- 16 percent. However, the frequency of alcohol-related problems among AFDC mothers was not greatly different from that found among non-mothers.

An alcohol-related problem was defined as an affirmative response to the following type of question: "Has drinking ever interfered with your work on a job?"; and, "During the past year, have you awakened the next day not being able to remember things you had done while drinking?".

Questions in the NLSY about drug use were less detailed than those about drinking. There was, however, an item about the age at which the respondent first used marijuana and another about the age at first use of other illicit drugs. The findings suggest that AFDC mothers are slightly more likely than other mothers to have first used marijuana in adolescence and less likely to have never used it, but the differences are not statistically significant.

- Nearly half of AFDC mothers aged 22-30 in 1987 -- versus 42 percent of non-poor mothers -- had first used marijuana as teenagers.

- Thirty-five percent of AFDC mothers -- as opposed to 43 percent of non-poor mothers -- said they had never used marijuana.

The marijuana use of poor, non-AFDC mothers was similar to that of the non-poor mothers, whereas non-mothers were relatively high in early marijuana use, like the AFDC mothers.

As with marijuana, mothers receiving AFDC and non-mothers tended to report earlier use and greater overall use than non-poor mothers of other illicit drugs. Differences were slight, although, in this case, statistically significant.

- Nearly one-quarter of the mothers who received AFDC assistance reported using other illicit drugs before the age of 21; 73 percent said they had never used such drugs.
- Nineteen percent of non-poor mothers had used other drugs before age 21; 78 percent said they never used such drugs.

Thus, the available evidence from national surveys suggests that problems stemming from alcohol and drug use may be somewhat more frequent among AFDC recipients than among other poor women and non-poor women with children. The differences do not seem substantial, though. It is important to stress the limitations of the available data and the fact that these data were collected before the height of the "crack" epidemic. Clearly, more thorough and up-to-date data on this topic are needed.

## **MOTHERS WHO RECEIVE AFDC ARE PRONE TO DEPRESSION**

There is reason to believe that AFDC mothers are more prone to mental health problems, especially depression, than are non-poor women with children. Obviously, this could affect their chances of finding and keeping paid employment. In the first wave of the National Survey of Children, mothers with children aged 6-11 were asked: "How often do you have days when you feel sad and blue?".

- One-third of single mothers on AFDC reported feeling this way "fairly" or "very often." By contrast, only 8 percent of married mothers not on AFDC reported such frequent feelings of depression.

Although only a single question was used to assess maternal depression in the National Survey of Children, the findings are supported by several local studies that used longer scales and obtained similar results. The local studies include two evaluations of innovative welfare-to-work programs, the "New Chance" project (Polit, Quint, & Riccio, 1988; Polit, 1990, personal communication), and the Minority Female Single Parent Demonstration program (Maynard, Kisker, & Kerachsky, 1990; Maynard, 1990, personal communication), as well as the "Family Independence Study," a survey

of AFDC mothers and two comparison groups in the State of Washington (Weeks et al, 1990).

In the Washington State study, for example, a 10-item scale developed by Pearlin (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, & Mullan, 1981) was used to measure depression. Of women in the study who were receiving public assistance, 13 percent had extremely high scores<sup>8</sup> on the scale. That proportion was four times higher than the proportion with high depression scores among non-poor women, and about 50 percent higher than the equivalent proportion among low-income women who were not receiving public assistance (Weeks et al, 1990, Chapter 5, p. 5).

What is not yet clear is how many AFDC recipients have mental health problems severe enough to require clinical treatment, or anti-depressant medication, and how many would be helped by constructive changes in their life circumstances. Relevant to the latter issue is the finding from the Family Independence Study that there was less depression among welfare mothers who worked in the previous year than among those who did not. However, the reason for this association is not known. In addition, a number of studies have found depression to be more frequent among low-income women who are divorced or never-married than among those who are married (Zill, 1978; Belle, 1982).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF LONG-TERM WELFARE RECIPIENTS**

Long-term welfare dependency is a source of particular concern to policy makers and the public (Bane and Ellwood, 1986, 1983). Those who remain on welfare over long periods account for a high proportion of all welfare costs and undermine the support of the program as a temporary help for parents in times of need. For this reason, the Family Support Act has identified long-term recipients as a focal group to receive help in becoming economically independent. Long-term recipients are defined in the FSA as persons who have received AFDC in three of the last five years. What are the characteristics of this group with whom service providers will be attempting to work?

For these analyses of respondents in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), a long-term welfare recipient was a woman aged 22-30 in 1987 who was a mother and who received AFDC payments for three or more of the previous five years. The characteristics of these women are compared with: mothers who had received welfare during the previous five years but who received payments only during one or two years; mothers who were in poverty at the time of the 1987 survey but who never received welfare during the previous five years; mothers who were not in poverty at the time of the 1987 survey and who never received welfare during the previous five years; and women of the same age range who were not mothers as of 1987.

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<sup>8</sup> A high depression score was defined as a score of 30 or more on the scale, which ranged from 10 to 40 point. This is the equivalent of answering all 10 depression symptom items as being true “frequently” or “most of the time.”

Making these distinctions reveals that these groups are strikingly different in a variety of ways.

### ***Long-Term Recipients Are More Likely to Have Been Teen Mothers***

There is a clear association between early childbearing and long-term welfare reciprocity. Forty-three percent of the women who are long-term recipients were age 17 or younger when their first child was born, compared with just a quarter of shorter-term recipients and poor non-recipients. Only one in ten non-poor mothers was as young as 17 when her first child was born.

### ***Long-Term Recipients Are Apt to Be Black or Hispanic***

A third of black women in their twenties report that they have received AFDC during the previous five years, half of them for three years or longer. A fifth of Hispanic women in their twenties have received AFDC, a bit less than half for three years or more. On the other hand, only one in ten women who are neither African-American nor Hispanic received AFDC during the previous five years, and only 2 percent received AFDC as long as three of the previous five years.

### ***Most Long-Term Recipients Have Not Completed High School***

As one would expect, educational attainment and welfare history are strongly associated. (Table 13). Among women who are long-term welfare recipients, 43 percent lack any type of high school certificate. However, a third do hold a diploma and another 13 percent have a GED, while 12 percent have completed more than twelve years of schooling. The proportion lacking a regular high school diploma falls from 56 percent among long-term recipients, to 44 percent among both shorter-term recipients and poor non-recipients, to 19 percent among mothers who were not poor, to 7 percent among women in their twenties who are not mothers.

### ***Long-Term Recipients Have Larger Families***

Large families can increase poverty both by making labor force participation more difficult for mothers and by increasing the demands for support, thereby increasing the proportion who are poor at any given income level. Long-term welfare recipients studied in the NLSY are not only more often poorly educated, they are more likely to have large families. One in ten have four or more children, though they are only in their twenties. Three in ten have three or more children, as do two in ten shorter-term recipients, and one in ten non-poor mothers. However, poor mothers who have never been on AFDC also have relatively large families, with three in ten having three or more children. (Table 14.)

### ***Long-Term Recipients Are Less Likely to Have a Man in the House***

Differences in the proportions having a spouse or father-figure in the home are due in part to the fact that AFDC is primarily a program for non-married mothers. They also clearly reflect the contributions of a male earner in helping families to escape poverty. Among long-term welfare recipients, a father, spouse or partner is present in a third of the households. (Table 15.) This is not a trivial proportion and suggests that we need to know more about the characteristics of these men, such as their education, health, ability, and work experience. Other family types are more likely, though, to have a father spouse or partner present, increasing from 53 percent among the shorter-term welfare recipients, to 60 percent among poor families that never received welfare, to 90 percent among non-poor families.

### ***The Cognitive Achievement Test Scores of Long-Term Recipients Are Striking Low***

When the distribution of women's scores on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) taken in 1980 by participants in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth was examined, the disadvantage of the long-term welfare recipients was quite striking. On a scale with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, the mean score of the long-term recipients was 84, whereas that of the shorter-term recipients was 89. Only 13 percent of the long-term recipients attained scores that were above average, compared with 28 percent of the shorter-term recipients, 23 percent of the poor non-recipients, 54 percent of the non-poor mothers, and 67 percent of the non-mothers. In fact, 56 percent of the long-term welfare recipients scored below one standard deviation under the mean, a very-low score obtained by only 17 percent of the entire sample of NLSY women. (Table 16.)

### ***The Work Histories of Long-Term Recipients Are Relatively Sporadic***

In the case of virtually all measures of work, training and transfer receipt, the long-term AFDC recipient stands out as having received more benefits and worked less during the previous five years. (Table 17.) Long-term welfare recipients were much more likely to have received more than \$10,000 in welfare benefits during the previous three years than other groups. This is not surprising, given the definition of the groups; but the magnitude of the difference is striking. Virtually half of the long-term recipients obtained more than \$10,000 in benefits, while only a handful of persons in any of the other groups received that much.

One might anticipate that long-term recipients have a weaker work history. The magnitude of the differences is quite dramatic however, with 58 percent of long-term recipients recording no weeks worked during the previous year. A third of the mothers in the shorter-term receipt group and a third of the poor mothers who never received AFDC reported zero weeks worked in the previous year as well, compared with less than a quarter of the non-poor mothers. As one might expect, nearly all of the non-mothers were employed at least a week.

To examine employment from another perspective, the proportion who worked 41 or more weeks during the previous year was also tabulated. Three-quarters of non-mothers and half of non-poor mothers maintained this extensive an attachment to the labor force, as did three in ten poor mothers who never received AFDC and a third of those who ever received AFDC. However, only 16 percent of the long-term recipients worked as many as 41 weeks.

Nearly a third of the long-term recipients never reported paid employment during any of the previous five NLSY interviews, while only one in ten indicated that they had worked in two or more of the previous five years. In fact, 61 percent indicated that they were out of the labor force during more than half of the previous year. In all of the measures of labor force attachment, non-mothers show the greatest attachment, followed by a substantial commitment among non-poor mothers. Poor mothers who have received AFDC but are not long-term recipients are generally pretty similar to poor women who have never received AFDC in terms of their own labor force attachment.

### ***Long-Term Recipients Cite Child Care, Illness, and Inability To Find Work As Reasons for Not Working***

When the reasons given by women for not looking for work during a period out of the labor force in the previous year are summarized, no one single reason stands out. Personal and miscellaneous reasons account for about a third of all reasons. The frequency of this type of "reason" does not vary across welfare/income groups. What does vary is the reason, "Didn't want to work," provided by fewer long-term recipients than any other group. On the other hand, long-term recipients are more likely to cite illness, child care problems, school attendance, and an inability to find work as reasons that they were not seeking employment. (Table 18.)

### ***Nearly One in Ten Long-Term Recipient Has a Health Limitation***

Among all women in their twenties, only about one in 20 has a health limitation that prevents work or limits either the amount or kind of work that the woman is able to do. Women who have received welfare are more likely to have a condition that prevents work altogether than other mothers or non-mothers. Among poor mothers, though, they are not more likely to report that they are limited in the amount or kind of work that they can do, nor are they less likely to report that they have no health limitation of any kind. The difference lies in the higher proportion who have a condition that prevents work. (Table 19.)

### ***The Sex-Role Attitudes of Long-Term Recipients Are Similar to Those of Other Mothers***

One variable that clearly divides the women according to whether or not they are mothers is the measure of sex role attitudes. Not quite a third of the mothers hold traditional attitudes irrespective of their welfare or poverty status, compared with just 17

percent of the non-mothers. Whether these attitudes explain women's decisions to become mothers or reflect their experiences as mothers, students, and employees cannot be ascertained from these data. However, it is relevant to note that the greater transfer receipt and lesser labor force attachment of long-term recipients is unlikely to be due to their attitudes, since similar proportions of mothers who are not long-term recipients hold traditional sex role attitudes. (Table 17.)

### ***Long-Term Recipients Have Lower Self-Esteem***

On the other hand, long-term welfare recipients are more likely to have low self-esteem. That is, they are more likely to agree with statements such as, "I certainly feel useless at times" and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of." However, the proportions of mothers with low self-esteem are nearly as high among poor mothers and mothers who have ever received AFDC. Non-poor mothers and non-mothers are substantially less likely to feel negatively about themselves than are long-term recipients, with only 29 and 24 percent respectively being low in self-esteem. (Table 17.) Again, whether the low self-esteem of long-term AFDC recipients results from their dependency upon public support or contributes to their inability to become independent cannot be ascertained from these data.



## **SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS**

When women who receive welfare benefits are compared with other women, both poor and not poor, in national sample surveys, it becomes clear that welfare mothers are different from non-poor mothers in a number of ways. At the same time, the data show that there is considerable diversity within the welfare population. In particular, long-term welfare recipients differ in important respects from short-term recipients. On the other hand, in many ways welfare recipients are quite similar to poor women who do not receive welfare. These findings have significant implications for the Family Support Act and other efforts to reduce family poverty and welfare dependency.

### **MOTHERS WHO RECEIVE AFDC ARE DIFFERENT FROM NON-POOR MOTHERS**

Women who receive welfare benefits differ in a number of personal attributes and background characteristics from women in families that are not below the official poverty line. On the average, welfare mothers have less education, less work experience, more limited kinds of job experience, and more negative attitudes toward mothers working outside the home than non-poor mothers do. They have less self-confidence and less sense of control over their own destinies. Also, welfare mothers are more likely to have a physical condition that limits their ability to work regularly and reliably.

Welfare mothers score substantially lower on the kinds of verbal and mathematical tests that are usually taken to measure intellectual achievement or scholastic aptitude. With an average score of 86 relative to a population mean of 100, welfare mothers are nearly a full standard deviation below non-poor mothers, whose mean cognitive achievement score is close to that of women in general. Nearly half of all welfare mothers score at or below the 18th percentile of the distribution of achievement scores, and most would not be accepted as recruits in the U.S. Armed Forces. The finding of substantially lower achievement or aptitude levels holds true of welfare mothers within each of the major ethnic groups: blacks, Hispanics, and non-Hispanic whites.

Certainly, there is notable variability within the population of welfare mothers; however, within each race/ethnicity group, economic misfortune is far more likely to strike those in the lowest segments of the distribution of talent or schooling than those with average or above-average skills and educational attainments. School failure or a lack of educational opportunity seem, therefore, like critical factors in the genesis of economic dependency.

## **THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DIVERSITY IN THE WELFARE POPULATION**

Although welfare recipients are different from more affluent women on average, the statistical comparisons also show that there is considerable diversity within the population of welfare mothers. Based on the NLSY sample of women aged 22-30, for example, nearly a quarter of welfare mothers have cognitive achievement scores that are average or above average. Another 30 percent have test scores that are below average, but within one standard deviation of the mean. The same source reveals that 20 percent of welfare mothers have worked for 2 years or more during the last half-decade. On the other hand, more than a quarter have not worked at all in the last five years. This diversity suggests that programs aimed at getting women off welfare and into the labor force on a permanent basis are not likely to have uniform effects over all segments of the dependent population. The implications for the "JOBS" program and similar efforts are discussed in greater detail below.

## **LONG-TERM RECIPIENTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM SHORT-TERM RECIPIENTS**

Women who receive welfare for extended periods of time have different characteristics than those who are on welfare for limited time-periods only. The long-term recipients (defined as those who receive welfare for 3 or more years in a 5-year period) have lower cognitive achievement scores, less education, and somewhat lower self-esteem than short-term recipients. Not surprisingly, the long-term recipients are less likely to have engaged in paid employment for extended time-periods, and more likely not to have worked at all in the recent past.

On the other hand, long- and short-term recipients do not differ significantly in their attitudes about maternal employment or in their likelihood of having health conditions that limit employment. Also, even short-term welfare recipients are substantially worse off than non-poor mothers in terms of academic achievement, years of schooling, self-esteem, and history of stable employment.

## **WELFARE MOTHERS ARE NOT GREATLY DIFFERENT FROM POOR MOTHERS WHO ARE NOT ON WELFARE**

Whereas welfare mothers differ markedly from mothers whose families are not below the official poverty line, they are not very different in personal attributes or background characteristics from poor mothers who are not receiving welfare. For example, the average achievement score of mothers below the poverty line who have not gotten any AFDC in the last 12 months is identical to that of poor mothers who have received welfare during that period. Furthermore, both groups show relatively low levels

of self-esteem and fairly traditional (i.e., negative) attitudes about the desirability of women with young children working outside the home.

The two groups do differ in their likelihood of being married and the extent of their participation in the labor force. Compared to welfare mothers, non-welfare poor mothers are two-and-a-half times more likely to be currently married and one-and-a-half times more likely to have ever married. Also, non-welfare poor mothers ages 22-30 are twice as likely as welfare mothers in the same age range to have worked for two years or more during the last five years. However, more than a third of non-welfare poor mothers have worked for less than a year in the last five. In addition, more than 30 percent of poor women who have not gotten welfare in the last 12 months have received AFDC at some point in the last five years.

When short-term welfare recipients are compared with poor mothers who have not received AFDC at all in the previous five years, the two groups appear quite similar on most of the study dimensions, including recent work history. By contrast, long-term welfare recipients are worse off than the non-AFDC poor mothers on most measures of "human capital" and employment history.

The similarities between the welfare and non-welfare poor call into question arguments that welfare dependence is primarily the result of a learned set of negative attitudes and behaviors. (This conclusion must be tempered, however, by the limited range of measures on which the two groups can be compared using national survey data. It may be that there are important differences in depression or work-related attitudes, for example, that are not adequately tapped by the existing data.)

The lack of strong differences between poor mothers on welfare and poor non-welfare mothers also illustrates the point that even substantial increases in the labor force participation of welfare mothers will not necessarily bring these mothers out of poverty.

## **WHEN THEY ENTER THE LABOR FORCE, WELFARE MOTHERS WORK IN A NARROW RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS**

One other significant finding of the survey comparisons is that, when they do work, mothers who receive welfare assistance tend to be employed in a limited range of occupations. These are largely in the service sector, in low-level sales and clerical jobs, and light factory work. Very few AFDC mothers work in higher-caliber, blue-collar occupations, such as skilled production work, craft and repair jobs, or teamster positions, that might offer better wages and more favorable employee benefit packages than the kinds of vocations in which they are now employed. This is also true for poor women who are not on AFDC.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings summarized above have a number of implications for the Family Support Act and other attempts to encourage dependent adults to become gainfully employed and economically self-sufficient. For example, the relatively low educational attainments and academic skill levels that were found to be typical of welfare mothers would seem to imply that the Family Support Act's emphasis on skill building or "human capital development" is well justified. What the data do not indicate is how successful the educational efforts that will be supported by the JOBS program can be at boosting the earning power of AFDC mothers.

To the extent that the low test scores of welfare mothers reflect not just deficiencies in their education and training but limitations in their ability to learn, the data may point to rather pessimistic conclusions about the eventual payoff of training efforts. There is little doubt that the academic skills of many welfare mothers could be improved by measurable amounts through high-quality adult education. This may enhance their parenting abilities and improve their productivity, but it is not clear that it will be sufficient to raise the potential wage rates of some or perhaps even many to levels that would keep their families out of poverty. Many welfare mothers have a long way to go to become "college material," yet college-level training is a prerequisite for most "good jobs" in today's economy, particularly for jobs in white-collar occupations. If the welfare mother goes to work at a job paying at or near minimum-wage levels, she is not going to earn enough on her own, even if she works full-time, year-round, to keep her family out of poverty.

Thus, the test score data add fuel to concerns that the JOBS program may succeed only in converting the welfare poor into the working poor. These concerns are reinforced by the survey comparisons showing many similarities between non-AFDC poor mothers and welfare mothers. The non-AFDC mothers have worked significantly more than the welfare mothers, yet they remain in poverty. Moving many women from welfare poor to working poor may seem like good news for taxpayers; but it may not portend major positive changes in the lives of the women themselves, or in the life prospects of their children. On the other hand, if education and training activities are successful in bringing women into steady employment at good wages, both taxpayers and families would benefit.

### ***JOBS Is Likely To Benefit Some Welfare Mothers More Than Others***

The diversity in skills, educational attainment, and employment experience that is found within the welfare population makes it likely that JOBS and similar programs will have much more of an impact on some groups of welfare mothers than on others. Specifically, when welfare recipients are arrayed along a dimension such as academic skills, educational attainment, or work experience, it seems probable that work-to-welfare programs will have their greatest effects on the lives of those women who are in the second quartile of the distribution.

Women in the top quartile of the distribution possess average to above-average skills and seem quite "job ready." Most of them have already had a good deal of employment experience and are likely to find stable employment eventually, with or without a program to encourage and assist them. It is possible, of course, that some local programs will concentrate on these low-risk women in order to meet participation quotas or make it appear that much good is being accomplished. But if program participants in the highest quartile were compared with a similar group of controls who were not subject to the program, a good bet is that many of the controls would also be found to be moving from welfare to stable employment; i.e., little specific impact of the program would be observed (Gueron, Pauly, & Lougy, 1990).

In the bottom half of the welfare distribution, skill levels are extremely low, employment experience is meager, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are commonplace. The challenge of getting many of these women into stable employment that will bring families out of poverty is daunting indeed. Evaluation studies by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) and others on earlier welfare-to-work programs have found that it is difficult to make significant improvements in the incomes of participants or to produce large reductions in the dependency of this large segment of the welfare population.

By contrast, in the second quartile of the distribution, skills are below average, but not extremely low. Employment experience is more common, if sporadic. Feelings of paralyzing depression and self-doubt are not as prevalent. It is here, the MDRC studies have found, that real, albeit modest, effects of welfare-to-work programs are likely to be observed. It is also important to realize that the JOBS program has a heavier educational component than the programs of the 1980s.

Focusing on this segment of the population might still be seen as "creaming," given that the clear intent of the Family Support Act is to try to assist the long-term welfare-dependent. But if training and job-search programs can assist significant numbers of these women to find and keep stable jobs, that is hardly an achievement whose importance should be minimized.

### ***JOBS Should Broaden Vocational Options and Attend to Non-Educational Needs of Welfare Recipients***

There are two additional implications for welfare-to-work programs that emerge from the survey data on welfare mothers. One is that such programs need to broaden the range of vocational options that low-income women consider and do more to prepare and place their clients in non-traditional jobs for females, such as truck- or bus-driving, skilled production work, or craft and repair occupations.

The second is that welfare-to-work programs must attend to the non-educational needs of that portion of the welfare population who have other kinds of problems that undermine their employability. This means arranging for medical care and rehabilitation for chronic physical conditions, counseling and medication, where appropriate, for

emotional problems, and treatment programs for substance abuse, for those individuals who need help. By insuring that those welfare mothers who need them get services such as these, the JOBS program would enable more of the dependent population to leave the welfare rolls for gainful employment.

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TABLE 1. AFDC Mothers by Age of Mother and Age of Youngest Child, All States in U.S., Fiscal Year 1987									
Mother's Age	All Ages	Total	Under 1	1-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-15	16+
<b>NUMBER OF MOTHERS WHOSE YOUNGEST CHILD IS AGED:</b>									
All Ages	3,177,300		459,800	810,600	748,600	465,200	295,100	289,700	108,300
17 or less	31,200		14,100	16,700	400	---	---	---	---
18-19	166,300		64,500	87,600	14,200	---	---	---	---
20-23	604,200		160,500	272,000	153,300	17,800	600	---	---
24-29	1,005,800		142,300	284,300	330,200	180,200	59,000	9,800	---
30-39	1,009,800		71,600	136,700	221,900	218,100	170,200	154,700	36,700
40-64	360,000		6,800	13,300	28,600	49,100	65,300	125,200	71,700
<b>PERCENT OF MOTHERS WHOSE YOUNGEST CHILD IS AGED:</b>									
All Ages	100%	100%	14%	26%	24%	15%	9%	9%	3%
17 or less	1%	100%	45%	54%	1%	---	---	---	---
18-19	5%	100%	39%	53%	9%	---	---	---	---
20-23	19%	100%	27%	45%	25%	3%	---	---	---
24-29	32%	100%	14%	28%	33%	18%	6%	1%	---
30-39	32%	100%	7%	14%	22%	22%	17%	15%	4%
40-64	11%	100%	2%	4%	8%	14%	18%	35%	20%
<p><b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc. Calculated from tabulations prepared by ASPE Technical Support Staff, based on public use files from the National Integrated Quality Control System's random sample of each state's AFDC case-load, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.</p> <p><b>NOTES:</b>            Numbers are rounded to the nearest 100; percents, to the nearest unit.            The symbol "----" indicates a number below 50 or a percent less than 0.5%.            The NIQCS data does not distinguish between children who are under one year of age and those between one and two years. In the tables above, the number under one year is estimated as 51% of all those under two years; the remainder is added to the number of two-year-olds to produce the next column. (This percentage was determined from Current Population Survey figures.)            Because the "mother" in the data file in some cases may actually be the grandmother or an adult sister, cases in which the age difference between the "mother" and the youngest child is less than 13 or greater than 45 have been dropped.</p>									

<b>TABLE 2. Demographic Characteristics of Mothers in AFDC Families, Poor Non-AFDC Families, and Non-Poor Families, Families with Children 0-17 Years Old, United States, 1988</b>				
	<b>AFDC Families</b>	<b>Poor Non-AFDC Families</b>	<b>Non-Poor Families</b>	<b>All Families with Focus Child Aged 0-17</b>
<b>MOTHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL</b>				
Grade School Only	11.3%	15.3%	3.4%	4.9%
Some High School	32.2%	26.1%	9.0%	12.2%
High School Graduate	42.0%	44.0%	44.1%	43.9%
Some College	12.8%	10.8%	23.5%	21.7%
College Graduate	1.4%	2.3%	12.4%	10.8%
Graduate School	0.3%	1.5%	7.6%	6.5%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>LABOR FORCE STATUS OF MOTHER</b>				
Employed	23.5%	45.1%	65.1%	59.6%
Unemployed	10.1%	7.9%	2.8%	3.9%
Not in labor force	65.0%	44.6%	30.7%	35.1%
No Mother Figure in Household	0.3%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%
Mother less than 18 years	1.3%	1.3%	0.2%	0.4%
	100.2%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
<b>AGE OF BIO MOTHER AT BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD</b>				
Under 18	30.1%	26.4%	8.9%	12.4%
18-19	29.0%	24.7%	15.9%	17.9%
20-23	28.0%	31.1%	34.4%	33.5%
24-29	9.0%	14.5%	33.2%	29.4%
30 or older	4.0%	3.3%	7.6%	6.9%
	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
<b>BIO MOTHER AND FATHER EVER MARRIED</b>				
Yes	50.4%	83.3%	95.5%	90.1%
No	49.6%	16.7%	4.5%	9.9%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>CURRENT MARITAL STATUS OF MOTHER</b>				
Never Married	31.1%	8.7%	1.6%	5.0%
Married	31.5%	63.3%	88.7%	81.3%
Divorced	20.7%	14.9%	5.5%	7.7%
Separated	15.3%	9.6%	2.1%	4.0%
Widowed	1.1%	2.5%	0.8%	1.0%
No mother figure in household	0.3%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%
	100.0%	100.1%	99.9%	100.1%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from 1988 National Health Interview Survey of Child Health, Division of Health Interview Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics.				

<b>TABLE 3. Educational Attainment and GED/Diploma Status of AFDC Mothers, Non-AFDC Mothers, and Women Without Children, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>					
	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Not on AFDC</b>	<b>Not Poor, No AFDC</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
Number of Population	1.2 mil.	0.8 mil.	6.6 mil.	7.9 mil.	16.5 mil.
Unweighted Number in Sample	597	377	2,157	2,238	5,369
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>					
Grade school only	6%	11%	2%	1%	2%
Some high school	29	26	10	3	9
High school graduate	51	50	59	34	45
Some college	13	12	21	28	23
College graduate or more	<1	1	9	33	20
	100%	100%	101%	99%	99%
Tau c = 0.338, p < 0.001					
<b>GED OR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA</b>					
Neither	36%	40%	13%	4%	12%
GED only	14	9	8	3	6
Diploma	36	38	49	32	39
>12 years education	13	13	30	62	43
	99%	100%	100%	101%	100%
Tau b = 0.386, p < 0.001					
<b>Unweighted N</b>	587	366	2,129	2,222	5,304
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).					

<b>TABLE 4. Standardized AFQT Scores of AFDC Mothers, Non-AFDC Mothers, and Women Without Children, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>					
	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Not on AFDC</b>	<b>Not Poor, No AFDC</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
<b>INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT</b>					
Mean AFQT Score	86	86	99	104	100
Standard Deviation	15	15	14	13	15
<b>PERCENT WITH SCORES:</b>					
More than 1 SD below mean	47%	43%	15%	9%	16%
Within 1 SD below mean	31	34	33	22	27
Within 1 SD above mean	21	22	36	44	38
More than 1 SD above mean	2	2	15	25	19
	101%	101%	99%	100%	100%
Unweighted N	578	365	2,063	2,180	5,186
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY). AFQT administered in 1980.					

<b>TABLE 5. Average AFQT Scores (Standardized) of All Women and AFDC Mothers in Different Occupational Classes and Proportions of AFDC Mothers With Test Scores Similar to Those of Women in Each Class, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>			
	<b>Mean AFQT Score</b>	<b>Range (+/- 1 S.D.)</b>	<b>Percentage of All AFDC Moms with Test Scores in or Above Range</b>
<b>GROUP</b>			
All Women (n = 5,369)	100	85 - 115	
AFDC Moms (n=597)	86	71 - 101	84%
<b>OCCUPATIONAL CLASS</b>			
Manual Operatives	91	77 - 105	69%
Household Workers	95	78 - 112	67%
Crafts & Construction	95	80 - 108	63%
Service Occupations	96	81 - 111	60%
Clerical/Secretarial	101	88 - 114	45%
Sales Workers	104	91 - 117	39%
Management/Adminstrtrve	105	93 - 117	35%
Professional/Technical	108	96 - 120	29%
<p><b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY). Occupation and welfare status as of 1987, AFQT administered in 1980.</p> <p><b>NOTES:</b> AFQT = Armed Forces Qualification Test, converted to standard scores. Occupational class is based on woman's current or most recent job. Examples of "Manual Operatives": clothing ironers, dressmakers, gas station attendants, dry cleaning workers, meat wrappers, sewers. "Household Workers": child care providers, housekeepers, cooks, etc., who are employed in private households. "Crafts &amp; Construction": Dental lab technicians, inspectors, machinists, tailors, telephone installers, tool and die makers, construction workers, garbage collectors, teamsters. "Service Occupations": bartenders, waiters, dental assistants, nursing aides, flight attendants, hairdressers.</p>			

**TABLE 6. Distribution of Children by Characteristics of Their Mothers, Children Living in AFDC Families, Poor Non-AFDC Families, Near-Poor Families, and Non-Poor Families, Children Aged 3-5, United States, March 1988**

	Children in:				
	AFDC Families	Poor Non-AFDC Families	Near-Poor Families	Non-Poor Families	All Children Aged 3-5
<b>Mother's Current Employment Status</b>					
Employed full time	6.9%	19.6%	29.4%	40.5%	32.7%
Employed part-time	7.5%	14.5%	15.2%	20.1%	17.4%
Unemployed	11.9%	6.8%	4.2%	2.3%	4.2%
Keeping house	60.4%	53.8%	46.8%	34.5%	41.2%
In school	7.2%	2.1%	1.8%	1.2%	2.1%
Unable to work	0.5%	0.1%	---	---	0.1%
Retired, other	5.7%	3.1%	2.6%	1.4%	2.3%
<b>Mother's Employment Last Year</b>					
Full-time, full year	2.4%	9.0%	21.4%	32.6%	25.0%
Part-time, full year	2.0%	3.9%	6.0%	10.6%	8.3%
Full-time, part year	13.6%	15.3%	18.8%	11.9%	13.2%
Part-time, part year	12.1%	13.2%	13.4%	14.9%	14.2%
No work, looked for work	9.0%	4.8%	1.4%	0.8%	2.3%
Not in labor force	61.0%	53.7%	39.0%	29.3%	37.0%
<b>Mother Disabled<sup>1</sup></b>	1.7%	2.1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.8%
<b>Household member other than mother disabled</b>	3.7%	3.1%	1.9%	0.9%	1.6%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the March 1988 Supplement to the Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census.					
1. Disability is determined by the respondent saying that the main reason she did not work in the last year was because she was ill or disabled.					

**TABLE 7. Demographic Characteristics of Mothers in AFDC Families, Poor Non-AFDC Families, and Non-Poor Families, Families with Children 0-17 Years Old, United States, 1988**

	<b>AFDC Families</b>	<b>Poor Non-AFDC Families</b>	<b>Non-Poor Families</b>	<b>All Families with Children Under 18</b>
<b>Mother's Current Employment Status</b>				
Employed full-time	11.9%	25.9%	49.3%	43.6%
Employed part-time	8.6%	14.7%	18.7%	17.4%
Unemployed	12.4%	8.4%	2.7%	4.1%
Keeping house	53.1%	44.1%	26.7%	30.8%
In school	6.9%	2.8%	0.9%	1.7%
Unable to work	1.1%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%
Retired, other	6.1%	3.4%	1.6%	2.2%
<b>Mother's Employment Last Year</b>				
Full-time, full year	4.1%	13.1%	40.0%	34.2%
Part-time, full year	2.4%	6.5%	10.6%	9.4%
Full-time, part year	15.1%	17.6%	13.4%	14.0%
Part-time, part year	12.8%	13.3%	12.9%	12.9%
No work, looked for work	9.0%	4.5%	0.9%	2.0%
Not in labor force	56.6%	45.0%	22.2%	27.6%
<b>Mother Disabled<sup>1</sup></b>	5.7%	3.1%	0.6%	1.4%
<b>Household member other than mother disabled</b>	5.6%	5.5%	1.7%	2.5%

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the March 1988 Supplement to the Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

1. Disability is determined by the respondent saying that the main reason she did not work in the last year was because she was ill or disabled.



<b>TABLE 8. Work, Welfare, and Vocational Training Experience In Last Five Years of Mothers Who Received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Past Year, Mothers Below Poverty Line Who Did Not Receive AFDC, Mothers Who Were Not Below Poverty Line and Did Not Receive AFDC, and Non-Mothers, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
<b>Proportion in Population</b>	7%	5%	40%	48%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Number of Weeks Worked in Past Five Years</b>					
None	27%	13%	5%	1%	5%
1 - 51 (<1 Year)	30%	24%	10%	4%	9%
52 - 103 (1 - <2 Years)	23%	19%	13%	6%	11%
104 - 208 (2 - 4 Years)	16%	31%	37%	31%	32%
209+ (>4 Years)	4%	12%	34%	59%	43%
Tau c = 0.329, p < 0.001					
<b>Mean No. Weeks Worked</b>	59	99	155	200	167
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	64	80	83	66	84
<b>Number of Months Received AFDC in Past Five Years</b>					
None	0%	69%	90%	99%	87%
1 - 12 (Year or less)	21%	15%	6%	---	5%
13 - 24 (>1 - 2 Years)	18%	7%	2%	---	3%
25 - 36 (>2 - 3 Years)	15%	7%	1%	---	2%
37 - 60 (>3 Years)	46%	2%	1%	---	4%
<b>Received One or More of Government Job Training in Past Five Years</b>					
Yes	17%	11%	4%	5%	5%
No	83%	89%	96%	95%	95%
Tau c = -0.036, p < 0.001					
<b>Unweighted N</b>	578	365	2,063	2,180	5,186
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, based on public use files from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY), 1983-87 data.					

<b>TABLE 9. Percent Distribution on Self-Esteem and Female-Role Attitudes Scales of Mothers Who Received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Past Year, Mothers Below Poverty Line Who Did Not Receive AFDC, Mothers Who Were Not Below Poverty Line and Did Not Receive AFDC, and Non-Mothers, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
<b>Proportion in Population</b>	7%	5%	40%	48%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Self-Esteem Scale</b>					
High Esteem (10-14)	18%	18%	34%	40%	35%
Moderate Esteem (15-19)	32%	38%	35%	36%	35%
Low Esteem (20 or more)	49%	45%	31%	24%	30%
Tau c = -0.139, p < 0.001					
<b>Female Roles Scale</b>					
Traditional (18+)	32%	34%	30%	17%	24%
High Moderate (16-17)	29%	30%	26%	25%	26%
Low Moderate (14-15)	19%	20%	17%	23%	20%
Non-Traditional (<=13)	19%	17%	27%	35%	30%
Tau b = -0.149, p < 0.001					
<b>Unweighted N</b>	597	377	2,157	2,238	5,369
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, based on public use files from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY), 1987 data.					

<b>TABLE 10. Types of Occupations in Which AFDC and Other Mothers with Job Experience Have Worked, U.S. Women With Children Under 18, 1988</b>				
<b>Occupational Class of Current of Most Recent Job</b>	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>		<b>Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	
	<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Proportion*</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Proportion*</b>
Service Occupations	1	40.9%	1	35.2%
Sales Occupations	2	15.8%	3	12.9%
Administrative Support & Clerical	3	14.6%	4	12.9%
Machine Operators, Assemblers	4	8.7%	2	15.1%
Professional & Technical	5	5.0%	5	7.2%
Helpers & Laborers	6	3.9%	7	3.4%
Administrative & Managerial	7	3.6%	9	2.6%
Private Household Service	8	2.8%	6	4.3%
Precision Production, Craft & Repair	9	2.0%	10	2.1%
Transportation & Material Moving	10	1.4%	11	1.0%
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	11	0.8%	18	2.7%
Protective Service Workers	12	0.6%	12	0.5%
<b>Occupational Class of Current of Most Recent Job</b>	<b>Non-Poor Mothers</b>		<b>All Mothers with Children Under 18</b>	
	<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Proportion*</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Proportion*</b>
Administrative Support & Clerical	1	28.6%	1	27.1%
Professional & Technical	2	21.8%	2	20.2%
Service Occupations	3	12.8%	3	15.4%
Sales Occupations	5	11.1%	4	11.4%
Administrative & Managerial	4	11.1%	5	10.3%
Machine Operators, Assemblers	6	6.7%	6	7.2%
Precision Production, Craft & Repair	7	2.6%	7	2.5%
Helpers & Laborers	8	1.5%	8	1.7%
Private Household Service	10	1.1%	9	1.4%
Transportation & Material Moving	9	1.2%	10	1.2%
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	11	1.1%	11	1.2%
Protective Service Workers	12	0.5%	12	0.5%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., tabulations of data from 1988 National Health Interview Survey of Child Health, National Center for Health Statistics, 1990. Tabulations carried out by Technical Support Staff, OASPE, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.				
* Proportion of those women in category who are in the labor force.				

<b>TABLE 11. Measures of Health Status and Disability for AFDC and Other Mothers, U.S. Women With Children Under 18, 1988</b>				
<b>Health/Disability Indicators</b>	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Poor Mothers</b>	<b>All Mothers</b>
<b>HEALTH STATUS</b>				
Excellent	21%	22%	38%	36%
Very Good	24%	27%	33%	31%
Good	35%	33%	24%	25%
Fair or Poor	20%	17%	5%	8%
	100%	99%	100%	100%
<b>HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITY LIMITATION STATUS</b>				
Not limited	82%	85%	92%	91%
Limited, but not in major activity <sup>1</sup>	7%	6%	3%	4%
Limited in kind or amount of major activity	6%	5%	3%	3%
Unable to perform major activity	5%	4%	2%	2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS SPENT IN BED DUE TO ILLNESS IN LAST 12 MONTHS</b>				
None	44%	46%	47%	47%
1-7	36%	37%	41%	41%
8-30	15%	12%	9%	9%
31+	5%	5%	2%	3%
	100%	100%	99%	100%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., tabulations of data from 1988 National Health Interview Survey of Child Health, National Center for Health Statistics, 1990. Tabulations carried out by Technical Support Staff, OASPE, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.				
1. The "major activity" of the respondent was usually defined as working at a paid job or housework, depending on the labor force status she reported.				

<b>TABLE 12. Frequency of Alcohol-Related Problems and Age at First Use of Marijuana and Other Drugs Among Mothers Who Received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Past Year, Mothers Below Poverty Line Who Did Not Receive AFDC, Mothers Who Were Not Below Poverty Line and Did Not Receive AFDC, and Non-Mothers, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>					
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Poor, Non-AFDC Mothers</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
<b>Proportion in Population</b>	7%	5%	40%	48%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Alcohol-Related Problems</b>					
None	74%	84%	88%	77%	82%
One or two	14%	10%	8%	15%	12%
Three or more	12%	6%	4%	7%	6%
Tau c = -0.047, p < 0.001					
<b>First Used Marijuana</b>					
Never Used	35%	40%	43%	38%	40%
In Young Adulthood	15%	18%	14%	17%	16%
In Adolescence or Before	49%	42%	42%	44%	44%
(not significant)					
<b>First Used Other Drugs</b>					
Never Used	73%	73%	78%	71%	74%
In Young Adulthood	4%	7%	3%	5%	4%
Before Age 21	23%	20%	19%	24%	22%
Tau c = -0.031, p < 0.01					
<b>Unweighted N</b>	578	365	2,063	2,180	5,186
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, based on public use files from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY), alcohol-related problems and drug use reports as of 1985, welfare receipt, poverty status, and parenthood as of 1987.					

<b>TABLE 13. Education and GED Diploma Status of Women by Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>						
<b>Percent Distribution by Years of Schooling/ Diploma Status</b>	<b>Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status</b>					
	<b>Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years</b>	<b>Received AFDC &lt;3 of Past Five Years</b>	<b>Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years</b>	<b>Not Poor in 1987</b>	<b>Non-Mothers</b>	<b>All Women</b>
Less than 12 years	43%	30%	35%	12%	4%	12%
GED only	13%	14%	9%	7%	3%	6%
Diploma only	33%	39%	43%	50%	32%	39%
More than 12 years of schooling	12%	17%	13%	32%	62%	43%
	101%	100%	100%	101%	101%	100%
N =	230	450	200	1,890	2,565	5,335
Percent of sample in group	4%	8%	4%	35%	48%	100%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).						

<b>TABLE 14. Distribution of Women by Number of Children, Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>						
Percent Distribution by Number of Children	Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status					
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987	Non-Mothers	All Women
One child	33%	36%	39%	48%	---	44%
Two children	37%	44%	33%	40%	---	40%
Three children	21%	16%	20%	9%	---	12%
Four or more children	10%	4%	9%	2%	---	4%
	101%	100%	101%	99%		100%

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).

<b>TABLE 15. Distribution of Mothers by Presence of Child's Biological Father, Other Spouse of Partner, or No Spouse or Partner, Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, and Poverty Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30 With Children Under 18, 1987</b>				
Percent Distribution by Presence of Biological Father of Other Spouse/Partner	Welfare/Poverty Status			
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987
Biological Father Present	20%	43%	52%	85%
Spouse or Partner But Not Biological Parent Present	14%	10%	8%	5%
No Spouse or Partner Present	66%	47%	40%	10%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).

<b>TABLE 16. Distribution of Women by Scores on the AFQT (Armed Forces Qualification Test) Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987</b>						
Percent Distribution by AFQT Scores	Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status					
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987	Non-Mothers	All Women
More Than One Standard Deviation Below Mean	56%	38%	44%	15%	10%	17%
At or Within One Standard Deviation Below Mean	31%	34%	34%	32%	23%	28%
At Mean or Within One Standard Deviation Above Mean	12%	26%	21%	37%	43%	37%
At or Higher Than One Standard Deviation Above Mean	1%	2%	2%	17%	24%	18%
	100%	100%	101%	101%	100%	100%

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).  
**NOTE:** AFQT take in 1980.

**TABLE 17. Proportion of Women With Selected Characteristics, by Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30 in 1987**

Proportion of Women in Group with Given Characteristic	Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status					
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987	Non-Mothers	All Women
Received >\$10,000 from AFDC in previous 3 years	49%	6%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Worked zero weeks in previous year	58%	35%	36%	22%	6%	17%
Worked $\geq$ 41 weeks in previous year	16%	35%	39%	52%	75%	59%
Did not work at all in previous 5 yrs	34%	10%	13%	5%	1%	5%
Worked 2 or more yrs in previous 5 yrs	9%	44%	46%	74%	89%	75%
Hold traditional sex role attitudes	30%	30%	34%	30%	17%	24%
Have low self esteem	51%	42%	46%	30%	24%	30%
Were $\leq$ 17 when their first child born	43%	25%	27%	11%	---	---

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).

**TABLE 18. Reasons For Not Looking For Work During Period Out of Labor Force by Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30 Who Had Period Out of Labor Force Within Last Year, 1987**

Percent Distribution by First Reason Given	Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status					
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987	Non-Mothers	All Women
Didn't want to work	14%	24%	24%	35%	23%	28%
Ill, unable to work	6%	5%	4%	1%	5%	4%
Pregnancy	5%	10%	7%	9%	2%	7%
Childcare	28%	23%	20%	14%	2%	13%
In school	9%	3%	5%	4%	21%	9%
Couldn't find work, no work available	8%	3%	5%	1%	4%	3%
Personal, other	30%	32%	35%	36%	43%	37%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**SOURCE:** Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).

**TABLE 19. Distribution of Women by Presence and Employment Impact of Health Limitation, by Duration of Welfare Receipt in Previous Five Years, Poverty Status, and Motherhood Status, U.S. Women Aged 22-30, 1987**

Percent Distribution	Welfare/Poverty and Motherhood Status					
	Received AFDC 3+ of Past Five Years	Received AFDC <3 of Past Five Years	Poor in 1987, no AFDC in Past Five Years	Not Poor in 1987	Non-Mothers	All Women
<b>Has health limitation that:</b>						
Prevents work	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	2%
Limits amount <u>and</u> kind of work	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%
Limits amount <u>or</u> kind of work	2%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%
<b>No health limitation</b>	91%	90%	91%	93%	96%	94%
	100%	101%	100%	100%	101%	100%
<b>SOURCE:</b> Child Trends, Inc., analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (NLSY).						



<b>EXHIBIT I. Sample Characteristics and Survey Content with Respect to AFDC Parents of National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Current Population Survey, and National Health Interview Survey on Child Health</b>			
	<b>NLSY</b>	<b>CPS</b>	<b>NHIS-CHS</b>
<b>SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS</b>			
Year(s) of Survey	1979-87	March 1988	January-December 1988
Total Sample Size	5,369 women (in '87)	59,000 HH	17,110 parents
Number of Current AFDC Parents in Sample*	597	1,628	1,752
Blacks Oversampled	Yes	No	No
Hispanics Oversampled	Yes	Yes	No
Poor Whites Oversampled	Yes	No	No
Age Range of Parents in Sample	22-30 (in 1987)	15-64+ (in 1988)	15-64+ (in 1988)
<b>CONTENT</b>			
Ability Test	ASVAB	No	No
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes
Family Income	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current Employment Status	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hours Worked	Yes	Yes	Yes
Occupation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Earnings	Yes	Yes	No
Work History	Yes	Yes	No
Vocational Training	Yes	Yes	No
Health Status	Limited	No	Extensive
Work Disability	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chronic Illness	No	No	Yes
Drug Abuse History	Limited	No	No
Alcohol Abuse	Yes	No	Yes, but in different module
Welfare History	Yes	No	No
Marital Status	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital History	Yes	No	Yes
Fertility History	Yes	No	Yes
Migration History	Yes	No	No
Household Composition	Yes	Yes	Yes, detailed
Work-Related Attitudes	Yes	No	No
Child Care Arrangements	Limited	No	Yes
<b>NOTE:</b> All numbers are unweighted.			
* Self-identification of AFDC recipients in surveys tends to produce an under-count when compared with administrative records. The recipients missed appear to be predominantly those who received welfare for relatively short periods of time.			

<b>EXHIBIT II. Design Characteristics of Child Supplement to National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Current Population Survey, and National Health Interview Survey on Child Health</b>			
<b>Survey Characteristics</b>	<b>NLSY</b>	<b>CPS</b>	<b>NHIS-CHS</b>
Year(s) of Survey	1986 & 1987	March 1988	January-December 1988
Total Sample Size	5,226 children* (in '86)	43,030 under 18	17,110 children
Number of AFDC Children in Sample**	1,316	4,553	1,752
Blacks Oversampled	Yes	No	No
Hispanics Oversampled	Yes	No	No
Poor Whites Oversampled	Yes	No	No
Age Range of Children in Sample	0 - 13 (in 1986)	0 - 17 (in 1988)	0 - 17 (in 1988)
<p><b>NOTE:</b> All numbers are unweighted.</p> <p><b>COMMENTS ON SAMPLE:</b> The NLSY is predominantly a sample of younger children and the children of early childbearers. The CPS and NHIS-CHS are probability samples of all U.S. children in target age range.</p> <p>* Data actually collected on 4,971 children.</p> <p>** Self-identification of AFDC recipients in surveys tends to produce an under-count when compared with administrative records. The recipients missed appear to be predominantly those who received welfare for relatively short periods of time.</p>			

<b>EXHIBIT III. Survey Content with Respect to AFDC Children of Child Supplement to National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and National Health Interview Survey on Child Health</b>		
	<b>NLSY</b>	<b>NHIS-CHS</b>
<b>CONDITIONS AT BIRTH</b>		
Late or no prenatal care	Yes	Yes
Mother smoked, drank during pregnancy	Yes	Yes (smoked only)
Low birth weight	Yes	Yes
<b>PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>		
General health status	No	Yes (scale)
Frequency of illness in last year	Yes	Yes
Accidents, injuries in last year	Yes	Yes
<b>HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS</b>		
Health limitation	Yes	Yes
Chronic physical illness or impairments	Yes	Yes
Delay in growth or development	No	Yes
Learning disability	Yes	Yes
Chronic emotional condition	Yes	Yes
<b>INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION</b>		
HOME scale	Yes	No
Enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten	Yes	Yes
Attended Head Start	No	Yes
<b>COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE</b>		
Vocabulary test score	Yes	No
Grade placement	Yes	Yes
Grade repetition	No	Yes
Standing in class	No	Yes
School discipline problem	No	Yes
<b>EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING</b>		
Behavior Problems Index	Yes	Yes
Temperament scales	Yes	No
Needed/got psychological help in last year	Yes	Yes
<b>MEDICAL CARE</b>		
Reg. source of medical care	Yes	Yes
Last time saw doctor	Yes	Yes
Last time saw dentist	Yes	Yes
Covered by Medicaid/private health insurance	Yes	Yes

# **APPENDIX: DESCRIPTION OF DATA SOURCES**

## **The National Integrated Quality Control System**

Data on the basic demographic characteristics of AFDC parents and children in each state and the U.S. as a whole are available from the National Integrated Quality Control System (NIQCS). The NIQCS is based on an annual random sample of some 67,000 recipient households drawn from the welfare case records of each state, with state samples varying in size from 300 to 2,700 cases (Family Support Administration, 1989). It is conducted by the office of Family Assistance in the Department of Health and Human Services, in order to enable states to identify errors in determination of AFDC eligibility and amount of payment. Information obtained includes the age, sex, race and Hispanic origin of each adult and child in the household; the reason for the child's eligibility for AFDC; the length of time on assistance; the receipt of other assistance, such as food stamps, rent subsidies, and child support; the employment status of each adult in the household, including whether employed fulltime or part-time; registration in work programs, and if exempt from these programs, the principal reason for being exempt; amounts of family income by source; income disregards; and countable assets.

The NIQCS data have important gaps. Information on parent educational attainment is virtually useless because of extensive missing data. Furthermore, in states that do not now have the AFDC-Unemployed Parent program, the NIQCS tells nothing about the characteristics of two-parent families that will become eligible for the program under the new law.

## **The National Longitudinal Survey of Labor-Market Experience of Youth**

Comprising a nationally representative sample of men and women 14 to 21 years of age as of January 1, 1979, the respondents to the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor-Market Experience of Youth (NLSY) have been interviewed every year since 1979. The survey is sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, with supplementary information sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. It is designed by the Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR) at The Ohio State University, and is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), Chicago, Illinois. The purposes behind the collection of the data includes replication of labor-market-experience questions asked of an earlier cohort, as well as evaluation of the expanded employment and training programs for youth established in 1977. In addition, the NLSY data base contains detailed data on vocational training, labor force experience, and characteristics of current employment. The young people have also been asked if they have any health conditions that would limit the kind or amount of work they could do

and, if so, when the limitation began. Extensive information on educational attainment, fertility-related behavior, marital history, and other relevant topics has also been gathered.

The respondents have been administered the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Test Battery (ASVAB), the cognitive test battery used to select and classify applicants for military service in the enlisted ranks. The tests were given in 1980, when the respondents were 15-23 years of age. The respondents have been re-contacted annually after that, so that it was possible to tell, seven years later, in 1987, which women were and were not receiving welfare benefits, and to compare the earlier test scores of the welfare recipients with those of the other women in the national sample.

The Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) is a subset of the ASVAB. The AFQT composite score is made up of word knowledge, paragraph comprehension arithmetic reasoning, and numerical operations subtest scores.<sup>9</sup> This set of subtests is similar to those that make up most general intelligence batteries and college admissions tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The Defense Department considers the AFQT score to be an indicator of the potential recruit's general problem-solving capacity or trainability. Candidates who fall below a specific cutoff are not accepted into the Armed Forces except under unusual circumstances.

Inasmuch as the scale scores used by the Defense Department are not widely familiar, the scores obtained by the NLSY respondents on the AFQT were converted to an IQ-type scale. This was done by changing the raw scores into deviation scores, using the mean and standard deviation for all NLSY women, and then into standard scores with an overall mean of 100 and an overall standard deviation of 15.

The overlap between the test scores of welfare mothers and those of female job-holders was determined by comparing the converted AFQT scores of AFDC mothers with the scores of women in the NLSY sample who were currently employed or had recent employment experience in each type of occupation.

The NLSY files have some limitations as a source of data on the employability of AFDC parents. Although the overall sample included 5,369 women as of 1987 (85% of the original cohort of 6,283 women), and Blacks, Hispanics, and disadvantaged whites were oversampled, the number of women who receive AFDC in a given year amounts to only 597 cases. (If those who have ever received AFDC are included, the sample is of course larger.) This limits the number of stable subgroup estimates that can be made, and means that such subgroup estimates will have relatively large standard errors. The NLSY, as well as the CPS and the NHIS, are known to undercount the number of AFDC recipients because of under-reporting by those who are on the welfare rolls for only short periods of time.

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<sup>9</sup> The set of subtests making up the AFQT used by the Department of Defense has since been modified, with a math knowledge subtest replacing the numerical operations subtest. However, the composite given in the text is the one that was used in 1980, when the test was administered.

Information on drug and alcohol use and abuse is available in the NLSY files, but it has not been collected regularly. Moreover, there is evidence of systematic underreporting of drug use by some groups (Mensch & Kandel, 1988). There are comparatively few questions on work-related attitudes, and those were asked only in early waves of the study, casting doubts on their relevance to adult employment patterns.

Another drawback is that the sample covers only a specific cohort, namely those who were 14-21 as of January 1, 1979. If earlier or later cohorts of welfare parents are markedly different from those in this cohort, it would limit the generalizability of conclusions drawn from this data set.

1986 Mother-Child Supplement. In 1986, a series of child-related questions were asked of a subsample of the NLSY women consisting of those who had children. The unweighted number of children in this subsample who were actually assessed was 4,971 (completion rate = 95%); the number of mothers was 3,053. Of the children interviewed, roughly one quarter were in families receiving AFDC payments. Interview items included an assessment of the quality of the home environment, as well as tests of the child's intellectual development.

The primary limitation of this subsample is that it is not nationally representative of children in general -- only of children born by 1986 to women who themselves were 21 to 28 years of age as of January 1 of that year. Because the mothers were young, the sample includes an over-representation of disadvantaged children.

## **The Current Population Survey**

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a nationally representative survey of some 70,000 households, of which about 56,500 are actually interviewed (response rate = 81%). Conducted monthly by the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the survey is designed to provide estimates of employment, unemployment, and other characteristics of the general labor force, the population as a whole, and various subgroups of the population. It contains data on the number of people in the household, region of country, urban/rural residency, and educational attainment.

The March Supplement. The March income and demographic supplement contains questions regarding employment and income for the past calendar year whereas the monthly core survey only gathers information on activity in the previous week. The supplement also gathers detailed data on AFDC payments, receipt of food stamps and/or school lunches, child support payments, health insurance coverage, marital status, type of household, migration, work history, and disability status of AFDC parents and the characteristics of two-parent families that could become eligible for assistance under the mandated AFDC-UP program.

An additional 2,500 Hispanic households are added to the March Supplement. The 1988 March Supplement included 43,030 children under the age of 18, and 1,628 AFDC parents.

The CPS sample does not allow for state-level statistics the way the NIQCS does, although by combining data from two or three years' of surveys, state-level estimates for the 10-12 largest states can be made using CPS data. Public assistance income figures may be underreported in the March supplement (Zill and Peterson, 1989).

## **The National Health Interview Survey**

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is intended to provide a continuing picture of the health status of the U.S. population based on people's reports of their own health-related experiences and attributes (Zill and Peterson, 1989). This survey, which is designed by the National Center for Health Statistics and conducted by the Bureau of the Census, covers the incidence of illness and injuries, chronic conditions, the extent of disability, utilization of health care services, and other related topics. The number of AFDC parents in the 1988 National Health Interview Survey sample is 1,752. This survey does not have ability test scores, but it does have data on the educational attainment, current employment, health and disability characteristics, marital history, fertility history, and current household composition of AFDC parents.

The National Health Interview Survey lacks extensive work history information, but it has detailed health and medical care data, a relatively large sample of AFDC parents, and a high response rate.

1988 Child Health Supplement. This part of the survey (1989, pp. 225-227) (National Center for Health Statistics, 1989, pp. 225-227) collected data in an integrated fashion on the health, education, and care arrangements of children, including those whose mothers were currently unemployed or not in the labor force. The parent of one child, chosen at random from households containing children under 18, was interviewed. The Child Health Supplement (Zill and Schoenborn, 1990) has the advantages of being an in-person rather than a telephone survey, with a large sample (17,110 children) and a high completion rate (91%), containing a rich body of accompanying information on family characteristics, including receipt of AFDC, and the child's health and development.

## **References for Appendix**

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