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issues

Whither Welfare-to-Work?

Clarke M. Thomas



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Chapter 1

WELFARE: WINS AND WOES

The stories of Nicole King Marshall, Ms. S., and Kimberly Cuff, as well as four employers, put a human face on the 1996 “welfare-to-work” reform law that comes up for Congressional reauthorization in 2002.

Before relating their accounts, a quick explanation.

A national welfare program for needy single parents and their children had provoked controversy ever since its inauguration in 1935, with conservatives generally critical and liberals supportive. Therefore, an important new element was injected in the 1992 campaign, when Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton, as part of his effort to reach across traditional party lines, promised to “end welfare as we know it.”

That pledge did not come to fruition until four years later when, paradoxically, a Congress dominated by Republicans passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The acronym, PRWORA, proved to be too much of a mouthful, so much so that the law became more generally known as “welfare reform,” a term that embittered welfare rights groups and their allies as suggesting that the AFDC system was broken and needed to be fixed. That description eventually metamorphosed into “welfare-to-work.”

The welfare-to-work program has been surprisingly successful in terms of trimming the nation’s welfare rolls by half. But from the beginning,

its critics have said it adds a needless toll on already burdened single parents, mostly women.

However, most neutral assessments say that, except for a few activist groups, the battle this time is over money and details of specific programs, not the fundamentals. A *New York Times* article by Robin Toner quoted U.S. Representative Ben Cardin of Maryland, who is leading House Democrats on welfare issues this year, as saying: “The overwhelming feeling is, how do you fine tune the program, not how do you create a new welfare system for the country.”

According to Toner, “The world, in short, has changed. Bruce Reed, the former chief domestic policy advisor to President Clinton, and a leading force in welfare legislation, concluded, ‘The right has moved away from punishing the poor, and the left has moved away from sheltering them.’”

That doesn’t mean that questions aren’t being raised. Is the success of the program in moving welfare clients into jobs mainly due to the economic boom of the late 1990s—a result now being threatened by the ensuing recession? In the words of a book review headline in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, “Has welfare reform created victims or victories?” Or, as others would put it, are the tribulations that welfare women have undergone in the welfare-to-work process significantly different from those suffered by job-seeking and job-holding women and families from among the non-welfare poor?

Here are local stories that may shed some light on the subject:

A relatively optimistic account comes from Nicole King Marshall of Penn Hills. Her history is bolstered by the fact that she obtained help through a GAPS program at the Urban League of Pittsburgh initiated by The Pittsburgh Foundation (see Chapter 2). In her instance, she was aided by a GAPS caseworker from the community.

“They were very helpful. They taught us how to be resourceful, how to be self-motivated, how to believe in myself, and how to sell myself—do a resume, how to select clothes for an interview, and how to go there and things to say on an interview,” Marshall reports. Her son, Thomas, went to the Urban League Charter School where, in contrast to his public school days, he had a perfect attendance record and made all A’s.

Marshall did community service with the federal AmeriCorps program, working in after-school activities in Wilksburg, for a small stipend. She then obtained a job with the U.S. Postal Service at its California Avenue depot. In 1999, she married a counselor at Western State Penitentiary. Tired of long hours and long weeks in the postal service, when Marshall heard Home Depot was opening a store in East Liberty, she applied and landed a job. “It’s great to be off welfare, not having to report in to anyone,” she remarks.

Another former welfare mother has a somewhat different story. Ms. S., as she prefers to be called, is one who has pulled herself up by her bootstraps into acceptance at a prestigious college—no thanks, she adds, to the welfare system. Leaving her abusive

husband, she moved back to the Pittsburgh area and had to go on welfare. Anxious to further her education, Ms. S. says she constantly got the run-around from welfare workers because they gave her either no information or the wrong information. “My biggest beef is that the workers just tell you what they want to tell you,” she says.

Her money for schooling at the Community College of Allegheny County was cut off after one year, even though she wanted to go at least one additional year. “Going to school is work. Suppose you wanted to go to a two-year nursing program or to plumbing school. It is ridiculous to say, ‘Go to work and get a job that isn’t going to help you in the long run.’ Everything shows that for people with an associate or bachelor’s degree, that 90 percent don’t go back on welfare. They [authorities] just have an interest in keeping an underclass.”

In the meantime, Ms. S.’s car broke down, making impossible the daily routine of a 20-hour workweek, schooling, and child care for a young son. Ms. S. was about to be evicted from where she was living but had difficulty persuading her welfare worker (her eighth) to approve her entrance into an emergency shelter.

Somehow, her record at Community College enabled her to obtain a scholarship at one of Pittsburgh’s prestigious colleges, where she is working toward a bachelor’s degree. Since she is off welfare, she has worked weekends in janitorial service, at the day-care center where she leaves her son, in order to pay the bill.

As to proposals by the Bush administration to further marriages (see

Chapters 4 and 8), Ms. S. responds: “Will they give me food stamps to go to a bar to meet a man? And money for fancy clothes to attract him?”

Before giving the third welfare client story, it will be helpful to note the employer perspective. A particularly pertinent testimony comes from Madelyn Toliver, human resources manager at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh, who has had experience on both sides of the training and employment divide as a staff member at the Reemployment Transition Center, a job readiness program for the welfare-to-work system.

“The challenges I discovered there were that many individuals had never worked or hadn’t worked in a long time,” Toliver recalls. They didn’t know how to dress for an interview or a job, showing up in jeans and T-shirts. But a financing problem arose because while their caseworkers could provide a limited clothing allowance, that was only available *after* a job had been secured. The client had to come up with her own clothing money in the meantime. “Fortunately, there are different donor programs providing second-hand clothing, some of it nearly new for interviews.”

Child care often was a problem. “We had to encourage individuals to begin investigating the possibilities, and not count on a girl or boyfriend who might fail them, cause them to miss work, and lose the job.”

Toliver says that clients in subsidized housing often found that as their income increased, so did their rent—often meaning less net income. “They would feel they might as well stay on welfare,” she says. But time

limits (see Chapter 2) have now made that impossible.

When Toliver came to the Renaissance Hotel and was involved in hiring, she found some of the same problems for many of the 25 welfare women the hotel had hired. But because of rules on discrimination, she was not allowed to ask if they had adequate child care arrangements. However, she often could find out by asking if the applicant would be able to work weekends, the time in a hotel where the greatest demands for service may arise, and when many daycare centers aren’t open. After a person is hired, that question can be asked directly, and particularly so if the new employee begins calling off of work.

An especially big problem can arise when a mother receives a call that her child is acting up in school and she must leave work to go there to handle the situation. Obviously, the day-care center cannot fill that role. So, unless the employee has a relative who can respond in her place, the woman may have no alternative but to leave in the middle of the workday. Toliver says there can be a certain leeway extended, but only for so long before the employee has to find a better solution.

Toliver said that, overall, the hotel’s experience with ex-welfare clients has “gone extremely well.” That’s especially true in housekeeping where no formal training is needed and where women not afraid of hard work and willing to work weekends can be quite successful with incomes in the \$8-an-hour range.

An equally positive story comes from Brenda Loving, human resource-

es director at the historic Omni William Penn hotel, also in downtown. So far, the hotel has had quite good luck with the four welfare-to-work women who were referred. She said it's quite possible that also working for the hotel are other ex-welfare mothers who successfully applied on their own.

Loving says her office looks as carefully into the background of welfare clients as it does for any applicant, particularly searching for those with housekeeping experience. The hotel has found the ex-welfare women require no more training than others and fit well into the workforce, with no complaints from either side. Most telling, she says, is that the hotel is quite willing to continue hiring them.

Add, in this category, the pertinent experience of an agency that hires people for temporary work. Patsy Bradshaw, senior staffing specialist for Allegheny Personnel Services, says her agency has had good experience with ex-welfare clients, so long as they have skills, are bondable (no misdemeanors on their record), and are flexible about work hours. She points out that working as a "temp" helps provide a work record that a person can use in applying for a permanent job.

A third welfare-to-work client, Kimberly Cuff of Shadyside, represents the off-and-on group in the welfare world. She figures that she has alternated jobs and welfare about once a year. She calls it a vicious cycle and hopes she now has escaped with a job as an administrative assistant in Pittsburgh's Healthy Start program.

Cuff, too, had some help from the GAPS program. Child care dif-

ficulties often have been at the root of the problem. She sued her son's father for child custody, but the additional \$50 to her cash payment of \$318 a month didn't help that much (See Chapter 8 on child custody matters). Too much of that income has to go for paying her rent even in subsidized housing.

Now that her son, Tyler, is five years old and entering full-time kindergarten, Cuff figures she can stay off welfare. She now plans to enter night courses at the Carlow Hill College. Above all, Cuff says she doesn't want to get back into what she calls "The System," the rules and regulations and lack of empathy of the welfare department and even of the Child Care Partnership—subsidized child care.

For a final and illuminating example from the employer side, consider Sister Joan Laboon, manager of volunteer services at Mercy Hospital, who is in charge of the hospital's six-month training and tryout period for welfare-to-work clients.

For instance, Sister Joan says that, contrary to the usual idea about welfare clients, about half of the trainees at Mercy are men—fathers caring for one to five children, no mother present, often with the help of grandmothers.

Sister Joan says she makes clear three rules: (1) no "I can't work today" call-ins, with three such violations ending one's tenure, (2) no coming in late, and (3) demonstrating an ability to work with other people. "All of us have to work, and this is what you have to do in the world of work," she tells trainees. The promise

is that if they prove themselves, they likely will be offered permanent jobs at Mercy.

The trainees can be placed in housekeeping services or dietary services (preparing trays to go to bedsides), or, in some cases, clerical positions. Almost everyone has worked somewhere previously.

“But they lack self-confidence. It takes a lot of effort and caring,” Sister Joan explains. About half drop out.

Chapter 2

THE PITTSBURGH PICTURE

The advent of welfare reform in 1996 came amidst a storm of controversy that had mounted over the years since the passage in the New Deal era of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

In that era, 1933 to 1935, public policy expected men to work outside the home and women to care for their families. For men, the New Deal established—on a temporary basis—the Civilian Conservation Corps, enrolling young men in residential work camps from 1933 to 1942, and the Works Progress Administration, carrying out public works projects from 1935 to 1943.

ADC was to be permanent. It was originally promoted to give succor to orphan children of widows. But as an entitlement for anyone meeting certain criteria of poverty, it developed into a program for poor women, single for whatever reason, and their children. ADC therefore gained the support of many groups on grounds of compassion, representing a commitment by the federal government to guarantee all children a basic level of sustenance.

However, before long, the system spawned a legion of critics, especially as the 1960s brought an expanded and costly federal role with such programs as Medicaid, Medicare, and the food stamp program. For some, AFDC flouted the precept that “to eat you must work.” With

others, racism crept in because so many of the families on welfare were black. There were accusations of unwed women deliberately having “welfare babies” to stay on the rolls. President Reagan fueled the flames by telling anecdotes of “welfare queens” who rolled up in fancy cars to collect their benefits.

On the other hand, AFDC gained the support of many groups on grounds of compassion and of defending against racial and class discrimination. This bloc in particular included many elements of the Democratic Party, and the critics—but not all—were in the Republican Party. Therefore, an important new element was injected when a *Democrat*, presidential candidate Bill Clinton, in the 1992 campaign, uttered a promise to “end welfare as we know it” (see Chapter 1).

President Clinton found some of the leading liberals in his administration resigning in protest four years later at Clintonian support of what they considered legislation far to the right of what they had originally envisioned. Among them was such Clinton stalwarts as two assistant secretaries of Health and Human Services, Mary Jo Bane and Peter Edelman, the latter a personal friend of the Clintons. In fact, Hillary Rodham Clinton was said to be among those highly disapproving of what had happened. Even Senator Daniel Moynihan, D-NY, a politician notable for crossing back and forth over the conservative-liberal divide, predicted that the legislation would drive poor families into the streets, with Dickensonian vistas of children “sleeping on grates.”

The 1996 Law

But, nevertheless, the 130-page bill was passed and signed into law by President Clinton. The major components of the new law were:

- AFDC was ended as an entitlement and replaced with a program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). TANF, pronounced “TAN-uff,” established a block grant program to the states as a replacement for the 60-year-old AFDC system.
- As described in a January 22, 2002, report for Congress by the Congressional Research Service, “TANF enlarges state flexibility and expands the goals of family welfare. Beyond the traditional goals of enabling needy children to receive care at home and promoting self-sufficiency of their parents, TANF has two new purposes: promote the formation and maintenance of two-parent families and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.”
- Welfare recipients were given five years—the so-called 60-month “clock”—to get a job or be moved off of the welfare rolls. No longer were there any lifetime benefits.
- The same state welfare departments that had administered the AFDC program were to implement the change to TANF.
- However, the states had to achieve work participation rates, ranging from 25 percent of their single-parent caseload working at least 20 hours a week in 1997 to 50 percent of the caseload working 30 hours in 2002. The majority of welfare recipients were required to work at least 20 hours a week, moving up to 30 later on.

- All recipients had to be involved in “work-related activities.” These could include everything from job search, education directly related to employment for non-high school graduates, and vocational educational training (not to exceed 12 months) to unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment in either the private or public sector, and community service programs (with the provision of child care services for this last category).
- Each state was allowed to set what came to be known as a “carve-out,” a percentage of recipients who likely could not get or hold jobs because of such factors as mental problems or alcohol or drug addition. Pennsylvania set its “carve-out” as 20 percent of the rolls as of 1996.

The Pennsylvania Law

Pennsylvania’s welfare reform law, passed even earlier than the federal act, called for the following:

- All recipients must sign an Agreement of Mutual Responsibility, designed to motivate desired behavioral change. Each agreement would set forth “the responsibility and obligations to be undertaken by the recipient to achieve self-sufficiency, the time frames within which each obligation is to be completed, the penalties for failure to comply, and the actions to be taken by the department to support the efforts of the applicant or recipient.”
- The 60-month clock began ticking March 3, 1997.
- All recipients must be involved in “work-related activity.” The initial

activity could be a job search of at least eight weeks. Pursuit of education or job training was to be permitted, but only for a maximum of 12 months.

- “Work-related” activity could include the following:

Unsubsidized employment; subsidized employment in either the private or public sectors; work experience (including work associated with refurbishing publicly assisted housing, only if sufficient private sector employment is not available); on-the-job training; job search and job readiness for up to six weeks (no more than four weeks may be consecutive); community service programs; vocational education training (not to exceed 12 months for any one individual); job skills training directly related to employment; education directly related to employment, in the case of a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or certificate of high school equivalency; satisfactory attendance at secondary school or course leading to General Education Diploma (GED); and provision of child care services to an individual who is participating in a community service program.

- The state Department of Public Welfare (DPW) would establish a Road to Economic Self-sufficiency through Employment and Training (RESET) program to guide recipients into work.

The immediate upshot was that welfare caseworkers, whose primary responsibility had been eligibility enforcement, found their new task was to help recipients find jobs. No

longer was their job to catch cheaters, such as a recipient having a man in the house who should be providing support. Some found it hard to adjust. But for many caseworkers, happily, this was a move away from “playing cop” and toward the humane role that had originally drawn them as young idealists into welfare work. In the debate as state implementation of the 1996 law loomed, Peter Barwick of the Commonwealth Foundation, a conservative Harrisburg-based think tank, expressed doubts as to whether the DPW could manage such a philosophical changeover and urged that employment assistance be privatized.

But the bitterness aroused by the Congressional battle over the law lingered in many instances. Welfare rights groups in some communities continued to rebel against the law, backed by some advocacy groups and nonprofits, either convinced that it wouldn’t work or that, for humanitarian reasons, it shouldn’t. Other communities, such as Allegheny County, reacted in a different way.

Surprises

Still, to the surprise of many liberals and conservatives alike, the welfare rolls began to drop precipitously as the “clock” began to tick toward 2002. By 2002, the rolls nationwide had been cut in half, with the Pennsylvania decrease from 440,000 persons when the clock started on March 3, 1997, to 194,000 when the clock “struck” five years later.

A particular surprise nationally and in the state was that the biggest drop came in the first two years. In Pennsylvania, that meant 126,000

cases off the rolls (26 percent of the original 440,000). Most who left in the first two years did not return. Among the reasons for leaving TANF were (1) to take fulltime employment, (2) to take part-time employment, and (3) voluntary withdrawal.

Clearly, the effort was aided by the long economic boom of the 1990s with job opportunities opening up as never before. The jobs taken by ex-TANF persons included, in order of numbers: business services (mostly clerical), health services, eating and drinking places, social services, food stores, general merchandise stores, education services, miscellaneous retail, hotels and other lodging places, and automotive dealers and service stations.

But other factors were at work, too. Many women prudently took themselves off the rolls in order to save their benefits for a rainy day. That is, if a woman stayed off the rolls for two years, the clock wouldn’t “strike” in 2002, the end of five years, but that much later. (In the state, 3,125 women took advantage of this “time-out” provision to extend their eligibility.) Also, there was a supposition that some women had hidden jobs that would be jeopardized by the 20-hours-a-week work requirement under TANF and therefore voluntarily left the rolls in favor of keeping their off-the-record employment a secret so as not be penalized for the past. That may account for the fact that so many of those who left within two years did not return.

However, for those who might have thought TANF would be a financial boon, the story is otherwise. A

February 5, 2002 DPW report notes that the expenditures to support the cash-to-work program were \$4,696 per TANF recipient, as against \$2,257 per AFDC recipient in 1995-96 before TANF was instituted. Still, the difference in the size of the rolls—194,000 persons in 2002 as against 440,000 persons seven years earlier—meant a considerable overall savings. That explains why the current cost was pegged at \$1.21 billion, as against the mid-90s figure of \$1.28 billion

In Allegheny County

An important factor in the overall change, as noted above, was that many communities took a positive tack. That brings us to the story in Allegheny County.

The key was Claire Morrison, head of the Allegheny County Assistance Office of the Pennsylvania DPW. From the start, she took a two-fold positive approach. First, it's the law and let's make it succeed; and second let's not assume that welfare mothers *don't* want to work if given a proper opportunity. In a sense, these principles turned their backs on the traditional views, both liberal and conservative, concerning the attitudes of women on welfare.

Parenthetically, the Philadelphia community took a different approach, as welfare rights groups and nonprofit charity agencies bucked and stalled on TANF. Only much later did that major city scramble to catch up with Pittsburgh and other metropolitan areas that had resisted negativism.

A second pillar of Morrison's philosophy, outlined in an October 1, 1997, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* op-ed

article, was to focus first on job placement, not job training. Before signing a contract with a job-training agency, she wanted to know its placement record.

Third, with those contractors she began contacting employers to find out what job slots they wanted filled. Unlike the 1970s, when people were trained for such jobs as upholstering (for which there wasn't much demand), welfare clients were trained for jobs that actually exist.

Fourth, the process was designed not to burden employers unduly. As Morrison explained, "We never say to the employer, 'We want you to take this person with a problem.' We want that to be worked out before the person shows up for work."

With this approach, Morrison set about mobilizing Pittsburgh's employers, job-training institutions, and philanthropic foundations, as well as DPW caseworkers and welfare clients themselves to make TANF work. When Morrison left to become associate director of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Timothy Cornell, her successor, continued her approach.

The result: In Allegheny County, the TANF caseload of 18,657 families (52,117 persons) in 1997 five years later had been whittled down to 9,720 (25,784 persons), according to state DPW figures. (The comparable Philadelphia caseload decrease was from 72,711—212,615 persons—in 1997 down by March 2002, to 41,593—114,207 persons).

The reasons locally for welfare clients leaving TANF were (1) to take fulltime employment, 26 percent (2)

to take part-time employment, 10 percent, and (3) voluntary withdrawal, 15 percent.

Most of the people working are in entry-level, low-paying jobs making less than \$8 an hour. The average yearly income of these workers is approximately \$13,000.

But a record of job placements and average wages in recent years gives a useful picture. It shows job placements decreasing as the rolls dropped, but average wages increasing. (Note: The totals below include some who lost a job and got another or even a third.) Here are the figures supplied by the DPW's Allegheny County office:

- Year ending March, 1998: 8,917 job placements, average wage \$5.86
- Through March 1999: 8,901 job placements, average wage \$6.25
- Through February 2000: 7,842 job placements, average wage \$6.54
- Through February 2001, 7,181 job placements, average wage \$6.94
- Through March 2002: 6,872 job placements, average wage \$7.21

Note: This most recent report shows Allegheny County—for the first time—exceeding the statewide average.

Remarkably, when the “clock” struck on March 3, 2002, no one in Allegheny County was immediately pushed off welfare. The explanation by director Cornell was several-fold. First, of the 9,000 cases left, 2,000 were children living with grandmothers or other relatives and thus not affected by the rule that mothers can't stay on welfare more than 60 months. Second, many of the remaining 7,000

are included in the so-called “carve-out” described above.

Another 1,400 families were scheduled to hit the “clock” limit by the end of 2002. However, Cornell says that many of these cases are in the multiple-barrier category. They will be put in special programs, such as drug and alcohol, as well as mental health, treatment, so that they will not lose their cash payments.

The cash benefits in Pennsylvania are as follows: Two persons in a household, say a mother and child, \$316 a month; three in a household, \$403; four, \$497; five, \$589; six, \$670; for each person above six, an additional \$83.

Participation

What often is not understood is that even when clients go off welfare, they lose only these cash payments. Food stamps, medical care, child care, federal earned income tax credit, and job-training possibilities continue. The catch is that ex-welfare clients have to apply for them.

That has raised the question of how diligent DPW caseworkers are in notifying clients of these continuing benefits. The state government is worried about the ever-rising cost of Medical Assistance (Pennsylvania's name for Medicaid), so it may seem prudent to keep quiet about possibilities that increase any state cost, presenting a conflict of interest situation for conscientious caseworkers. However, applications for food stamps may now be made online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

An Urban Institute study showing that full participation nationally

in safety net programs could lift 3.8 million people out of poverty is relevant here. The Urban Institute is a Washington-based nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research and education organization that examines the social, economic, and governance problems facing the nation.

In a study, “Extreme Poverty Rising, Existing Government Programs Could Do More,” the Institute contended: “If policy makers improved participation in Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Earned Income Tax Credit, poverty could fall by 20 percent—extreme poverty could be reduced by 70 percent.”

That is, the programs exist, but people don’t know about them or are not prompted to apply for them. The Urban Institute recommends that federal and state officials could immediately streamline the system and improve access to benefits, by implementing such practices as:

- Standardizing income eligibility, work rules, asset tests, and client treatment across programs.
- Sharing information across agencies.
- Improving outreach and education.
- Developing family-friendly offices that accommodate the schedules of working parents.

The study acknowledged that full participation in government programs would cost more. The additional cost nationally of providing food stamps, TANF, and Supplement Security Income (SSI) would have been \$23 billion in 2001 dollars if all eligible low-income families with children participated.

The GAPS Initiative

An important part of the Allegheny County story was the GAPS Initiative, which caught national attention for its program of “promoting Employment Retention among TANF Recipients.” A collaboration of The Pittsburgh Foundation and the DPW’s Allegheny County Assistance Office, its principal funder was the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which gave \$1.39 million. The Pittsburgh Foundation provided \$842,242. The project director was Gerri Kay, The Pittsburgh Foundation’s vice president for program and policy, assisted by two senior program officers, Beverly Lovelace and Annette Green. A key component—involvement of community residents as caseworkers—was envisioned by Lovelace, who died in April 2001.

As described in an op-ed column in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on February 27, 2002, the GAPS “premise was that if progress under welfare-to-work was to be permanent, the women involved would need the kind of help that was not available under the customary welfare-system model. Lovelace asserted the need for involving community groups close to the clients who would choose local residents to be ‘hand-holding’ caseworkers with them.” This clearly was a novel arrangement, handing to a layperson a responsibility for which professional training heretofore had been considered essential. It’s worth noting that many of the case managers selected were credentialed in social work. In addition, case managers from the four agencies selected met together once a

month to share experiences in what was called a “community learning experience.” The chosen agencies were Hill House, Neighborhood Centers Association, Rankin Christian Center, and the Urban League of Pittsburgh, with nine case managers in all.

From the start, Mathematica Policy Research of Princeton, New Jersey monitored progress under contract.

Current or former TANF recipients were eligible to volunteer for GAPS, which eventually served 600 participants. Case management was the central element of the program model. Through one-on-one contacts with participants, case managers provided supportive counseling, advice on child care, transportation, workplace behavior, and referrals to other services in the community.

As elucidated in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 30, 2001, “To enable clients to contact them more easily, case managers worked nonstandard hours, provided home telephone numbers and scheduled office visits during nights and weekends. They even conducted home and workplace visits, accompanied participants on job interviews and sometimes took participants to appointments. ‘This is something that is different from the typical experience,’ said Robert Wood, a senior researcher at Mathematica and lead researcher on the study. ‘It is a more intensive intervention.’”

On March 31, 2001, Mathematica gave its findings at an Institute of Politics seminar:

- Most GAPS participants experienced steady economic progress during their first 18 months in the program. Wage levels remained low,

averaging less than \$8-an-hour. Even so, after adjusting for inflation, participants’ hourly wages increased an average of 14 percent in less than two years. Earnings gains more than offset the decline in welfare benefits.

- In spite of this economic progress, substantial challenges remain. Some GAPS participants (as high as three in 10) lacked health insurance for themselves and their children. Others (14 percent) had child care problems that made it difficult for them to stay employed. Transportation—with long commutes for those using public transportation—was another burden, although only 5 percent said this made it difficult for them to stay employed. Comment: During this period, The Pittsburgh Foundation worked with the Port Authority Transit of Allegheny County (PAT) to rearrange schedules to fit odd schedules, something of benefit to workers in general; see Transportation section below.
- Participants valued the supportive counseling, personal attention, and advice their case managers provided. At the same time, many expressed skepticism about the ability of these services alone to improve their employment outcomes. One GAPS agency, which provided emergency financial assistance, such as helping to pay for emergency car repairs or overdue rent or utility bills, had better employment success than the others. (Some respondents at the seminar thought this aspect of aiding in job retention was particularly significant.)

- Greater emphasis on job advancement for newly employed welfare recipients may be needed. In order to prevent ex-TANF clients from being stuck in dead-end jobs, the Mathematica report concluded: “These findings suggest that employment retention programs should consider promoting job advancement by offering help in paying for training and finding and paying for child care while participants attend educational programs.”

Comment: In fairness to DPW caseworkers, it is important to note the contrast in job roles. The case managers in the GAPS program had responsibilities for between 60 and 100 persons. The regular caseload for a DPW caseworker in Allegheny County averages 158, with the assignment sometimes rising as high as 200. Moreover, in the past, the major responsibility of DPW social workers was surveillance, that is, checking to see whether clients were following the rules (a man improperly in the household, etc.). Such activities—“snooping” in the eyes of those on welfare—too often negated any help a caseworker tried to extend.

Noteworthy is the fact that in all the reports and all the testimony in hearings on TANF, two problems particularly stuck out—child care and transportation. Not so incidentally, these problems affect many of the working poor as well as those on TANF, suggesting society sooner or later needs to come to grips with these challenges.

Child Care

The scarcity of child-care facilities,

and, especially good ones, continually surfaces. Even the two streams of aid coming from the DPW haven’t provided all of the answers. They are based on the principle that the parent selects the provider, with the DPW share of the payments based on the income of the recipient within the welfare-to-work process.

One stream is run by the Pittsburgh YWCA and is called the Child Care Partnership, designed for persons working 30 hours a week, with some consideration for participation in an approved training experience. The other is termed the TANF stream which operates through DPW’s Allegheny County Assistance Office to help pay for child care for those not yet engaged in the work force or in education and for those in the multiple-barrier group.

For TANF clients, the programs present two difficulties. One is that the mother has to sue for paternity or lose the subsidy. That can be difficult if there has been an abusive relationship or if the child resulted from what one official calls “a good party on a bad night.” Often, this stringent requirement can be modified in a court proceeding.

The second problem for clients is that on-time rules are strict. Miss mandatory minimum work requirements at the job, and you lose the child care subsidy. This stipulation can provide difficulties in a business downturn where the client doesn’t control the situation and may have to find another job, jeopardizing meeting the minimum work requirements for a particular week.

Even well intentioned efforts to meet certain situations can fail for running up against fundamental human nature. A particular example was the idea of establishing night day care as an aid for women working night shifts. That didn't work out well because small children like to sleep in the same bed every night. Switching back and forth between a child care bed when their mothers were working nights and the home bed on her nights off created problems. Therefore, the lack of clients often made it economically impossible for the provider to continue that service.

The question inevitably arises: With so much demand, why does supply lag? Bob Grom, president and CEO of the Heritage Health Foundation of Braddock, provides some of the details. His foundation resulted from the merger of the Braddock Medical Center with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC).

A client under either the TANF or Child Care Partnerships stream is guaranteed a subsidy covering five hours of child care service delivery. But she or he, under TANF rules, must work six hours a day. So the client is in a catch-22 situation, having to pay for the extra hour above five, not to mention for the time she is commuting from the child care center to work and vice versa.

Furthermore, the DPW does a rate survey every two years, learns the statewide average rate, and sets its subsidy at 75 percent of that figure.

Grom explains that from the providers' perspective, those two funding gaps lead to a moral and therefore fiscal dilemma. They realize that moth-

ers may actually need 10 or even 12 hours of child care service because of the six-hour work rule plus the time to drop the children off, go to work, and come back again, given the transportation difficulties. So they often bend their own billing rules by refusing to kick out the child after five hours. The result is that many providers are using their own moneys for up to half the service they render a given client.

The result, Grom says, is that the child care industry, even though becoming one of the largest industries in the country, continues to have a low salary structure. And that often translates into a low rate of employee retention, adding to the costs of recruiting and training: a round robin of problems.

Transportation

Here, some measurable progress was made in Allegheny County thanks to The Pittsburgh Foundation that convened the Allegheny County Access To Work Taskforce. The taskforce included representatives from The Port Authority, DPW, Three Rivers WIB, agencies dealing with transportation, social services and workforce development, and community leaders and residents.

The taskforce learned that agencies dealing with job preparedness, health, and GED were all united in saying they had the resources available, but that people couldn't get to them. This was especially true for people in some of the public housing projects, which sometimes seemed to have been placed in the most inaccessible locations possible.

The task force found some old-fashioned answers, such as changing or adding PAT bus routes, and some newfangled ones, such as using GIS (Geographic Information Systems), and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to pinpoint locations and routes and suggest correlations. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, PAT, and other stakeholders were involved in mapping out changes.

A first step was obtaining detailed information on each family or person who would utilize services if transportation to them were available. This attempt had to include accommodating to the fact that some TANF clients might need service three or five times a day, including changing buses. Fitting with part-time jobs that have irregular hours can complicate travel schedules.

Using Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission technology, the task force tracked the remote locations, particularly in the upper Mon Valley area of the county. With GIS technology, that information was overlaid on PAT routes at the time. "All too often, we found that you can't get to here from there." PAT's hub and spoke system, based on downtown Pittsburgh, simply couldn't get the needed job done.

Several answers evolved. One was to establish some new bus routes. The most spectacular example was the inauguration of a new lateral route, 59A. This arrangement connected Monroeville Mall with Century III Mall, touching on the way as many as possible education, child care, and job training facilities, as well as job-producing locations such as retail

establishments and nursing homes. (Later, as the Waterfront in Homestead was developed, it was added to the mix.) The first \$1 million needed came from the Federal Transportation Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) fund, which brought a \$1 million match from the state DPW. Since the inauguration of the program in 1998, it has netted \$15 million, including some county funds and moneys from the Sanders court decision concerning the integration of public housing projects into municipalities, most of which are to the east of Pittsburgh.

But this answer prompted two questions. One was the street pattern in some of the remote areas where regular buses couldn't make the necessary 90-degree turns. That brought into the picture a system that was named WorkLink, the use of community vans which do loops all day all week, connecting to PAT nexus points in East Pittsburgh, Braddock, and Clairton. Again GIS, GPS, and other technologies helped in correlating vans and buses.

This approach provided a partial answer to the second question: What about Clairton? Even though this is an empowerment school system now operating under certain state mandates, it has no school bus system. That fact particularly complicates the life of a TANF single mother with many children trying to tie together her various children's trips to and from different schools with journeys to child care for some kids and, of course, her own trip to a job or job training—not to mention visits to doctor's offices, the bank, and so on.

The success of 59A prompted a similar effort to connect job seekers in Pittsburgh with jobs in fast-growing Cranberry Township, in Butler County where the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Interstate 79 intersect.

Grom said that in some cases employers were helpful. But too often bigger companies would turn aside such suggestions as changing shift hours to correlate with established bus schedules, saying, “We are providing the jobs. That’s enough. Other things are somebody else’s problem.”

The Heritage Health Foundation official makes an incisive point at this juncture. In an area losing population with a dwindling slice of people of job-holding age, Southwestern Pennsylvania should be making every effort to have people trained and available. Grom says there needs to be mass planning for entry-level jobs, such as for the advent of a facility like the Waterfront in Homestead. Already such firms as Echostar in McKeesport are finding that the job seekers they had been promised aren’t readily available, so they have had to cast a wider geographic net to meet their needs.

As with other societal factors, the welfare-to-work program has uncovered problems that need to be solved if this region is to keep job producers. And business and employer groups should be cooperating with such efforts, Grom holds.

We now turn to some recommendations by local groups in anticipation of the reauthorization of the 1996 welfare-to-work law.

Chapter 3

ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

An important component of the TANF-related effort in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County was the holding of three Roundtable discussions to draw on experiences here in order to frame local opinion concerning the forthcoming reauthorization of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act.

The Roundtables were conducted by the Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh, with the impetus coming from the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB). Participants represented a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including operators of TANF-funded programs; public decision-makers, including Timothy Cornell, head of the Allegheny County office of the state DPW; foundations; private employers; community-based organizations; and researchers. The dates of the Roundtables were March 6, 2001; June 21, 2001; and February 15, 2002.

First, a word about the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board that was created in 1999 under the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which established local workforce investment areas, certified by state governors. Here, board members were appointed by Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy and Allegheny County Chief Executive Jim Roddey. They represented a diverse group of stakeholders—including employers, training providers, labor unions, government agencies, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and one-stop

partners. Chairman of the TRWIB is David Malone, chief financial officer of Gateway Financial Group. Ron Painter is the executive director.

Under WIA, Workforce Investment Boards are responsible for:

1. Creating a local workforce development plan.
2. Selecting operators and training providers, which includes chartering one-stop service delivery centers and satellites.
3. Overseeing a program, which includes selecting qualified providers for youth, local employment and training, and one-stop programs.
4. Negotiating local performance measures.
5. Creating an employment statistics system.
6. Making employer linkages.
7. Connecting, brokering, and coaching stakeholders in workforce development.

The purpose is to aid local employers and citizens by making the local labor market system more efficient and effective.

It was under this directive that the TRWIB became involved in one of the important challenges facing the region—the DPW’s welfare-to-work program, TANF. As part of carrying out that responsibility, Painter suggested the Roundtables to elicit information and experiences as a basis for recommendations for Congressional action on reauthorizing the 1996 Welfare Reform Act.

As it happened, just 11 days after the following recommendations were assembled, President George W. Bush announced his reauthorization version. That program, laid out on

February 26, 2002, will be outlined in the next chapter, which also will contain an analysis comparing its provisions with the recommendations coming out of the local Roundtables.

The following outline of the Roundtable’s findings was compiled by Hannah Holm, TRWIB researcher:

Continuing Obstacles to Facilitating Self-Sufficiency and Enhancing Family Well-Being

- The limited amount of education and training that can count as a work activity under TANF.
- The loss of Medical Assistance [Medicaid] by many TANF “leavers,” or former TANF recipients. When people stop receiving government-subsidized Medical Assistance, they often do not find coverage elsewhere. Copayments required for employer-supported health plans often prevent low-wage workers from taking advantage of health benefits even when they are available. Allegheny County has the highest percentage in Pennsylvania of former TANF recipients still receiving government-subsidized Medical Assistance: 77%.
- Too little support for drug and mental health treatment. (North Carolina, California, and Florida have made significant investments in this area.)
- Too little support for quality child care. There are currently waiting lists for subsidized child care. It would take an additional \$290 million to cover the nation’s subsidized child care needs. Both the quality and the affordability of child care need to be addressed.

- Too little support for housing and a lack of coordination between housing and welfare programs. Increasing numbers of families are paying more than half their incomes for housing, which is often of low quality. Many people have incomes too high to qualify for public housing, but too low to be able to pay market rates. Criminal records also make public housing inaccessible to some people.
- Transportation: Access to reliable transportation to work is a key factor in determining whether a person can obtain and keep a job. A multilayered system is necessary that covers both urban and rural areas and considers both mass transit and assistance in buying cars.
- Disincentives for sharing information across agencies, as well as policies created in “silos” that drive wedges between agencies.
- Legal hurdles that prevent poor fathers from emotionally and financially supporting their children.

Considering Solutions

- Many of the problems confronting TANF recipients and former TANF recipients also confront other poor families.
- State and local flexibility are important, but without some mandates, some could fail to provide crucial services.
- If poverty reduction is mandated or incentivized, it is important carefully to consider how poverty is measured and how success is defined.
- A paradigm shift is needed. TANF should provide a safety net and operate as a pathway to self-sufficiency.

There was broad consensus within the group that it is important to *maintain TANF authorization at current budgeted levels*. The purposes are: (1) to allow continued innovation in the effort to develop more effective programs, (2) to enable support for individuals to advance beyond low-wage employment, and (3) to provide assistance to those with the biggest barriers to employment.

(Comment: The thinking here was that state welfare departments and their contracted providers shouldn’t be penalized for their successes in cutting the welfare rolls on the reasoning: “Oh, now you have such smaller rolls, you don’t need as much money.” Also, it represented the cumulative experience of the necessity for and the costs of job retention and advancement for TANF clients so that they don’t slip back onto the welfare rolls.)

In addition, the Roundtable participants set out the following policy agenda:

Focus on Poverty Reduction not Program Statistics

- Require state consolidated plans for poverty reduction.
- Reform the calculation of the outdated federal poverty rate in order better to reflect current conditions.
- Enhance coordination between departments and agencies that serve low-income people, such as the federal departments of Labor, Housing, and Urban Development (HUD) and Health and Human Services (HHS)

Note: The coordination recommendation came out of “silo” experiences related by Roundtable

participants of agencies isolated in a farm-silo-like environment where they didn't know what each other was doing. For example, a DPW caseworker might not know that one of her clients was receiving drug and alcohol treatment from another agency. Part of the "silo" atmosphere is created by confidentiality requirements, an excellent example of one "good" cross-trumping another.

Reduce Barriers to Work

- Maintain Medical Assistance (Medicaid) coverage beyond the date when individuals start work, replacing cash assistance with work income.
- Similarly, extend public housing benefits beyond the date when individuals go off cash assistance and begin working.
- Enhance support for drug treatment and mental health rehabilitation, problems that constitute the primary barriers for many long-term TANF recipients in obtaining and retaining employment.
- Provide access to affordable, quality child care.
- Support transportation solutions that enhance job access.

Comment: The data for these recommendations particularly came out of the Pittsburgh Foundation's GAPS study described in Chapter 2. That study demonstrated that problems and costs with child care, transportation, and housing were major deterrents for women going off welfare. Those findings, incidentally, were found to apply to the working poor in general—requiring public attention because it is from

the ranks of the working poor that people slip into welfare and the group that ex-TANF clients first join when going off welfare and into the work force.

Facilitate Advancement from Low-wage Work to Self-sufficiency

- Make education a "work activity" under TANF.
- Adjust federal requirements for participation rates and time limits for particular work activities in order to enable TANF recipients to meet competing responsibilities to work, family, and skill development.
- Provide incentives for employers, unions, and nonprofit organizations to provide continuing education and advancement opportunities for entry-level workers.

Comment: These recommendations parallel findings in both the private and public sectors of the need for continuing education to move employees up the advancement ladder. But this fact was overlooked by the framers of the 1996 welfare reform legislation in their zeal to move people into the work force, not to mention their fears that "training" could provide an endless dodge for people and training agencies to have clients stay on the the swimming pool edge, rather than jump into the water actually to swim. The need is to allow leeway to fulfill the proven advancement need while avoiding the last named issue.

In the next chapter, we shall outline the Bush administration proposals.

Chapter 4

PRESIDENT'S PROPOSALS

President Bush on February 26, 2002, in the following speech to the Chamber of Commerce of Charlotte, North Carolina, outlined his proposals for welfare reform and job training. Because the Bush administration acted earlier than expected, this message marked the starting point for mobilizing groups to affect the coming Congressional struggle over reauthorization of the 1996 law. Therefore, we have excerpted that portion from the President's total speech, which dwelt on numerous other subjects, including the war on terrorism, education, and his faith-based initiative.

... In order to make sure our economy recovers, in order to make sure we've got a balance sheet that is reasonable as we go into the [budgetary] out-years, I want to insist Congress hold the line in spending, that they not get carried away, that they not spend—that what they think sounds like—sounds good is not going to work.

One area in which I'm going to hold the line on the budget, though, is on TANF funds. My budget calls for over \$17 billion a year for TANF funds to be block-granted back to states. Now, there's going to be some in Congress that say we've got to reduce the TANF monies, welfare monies, because the caseloads have dropped. I don't think we ought to do that at this time in history. And so the budget I've submitted holds the line on TANF. On the other hand, I

do think we need some reforms, and I want to share with you some of those.

But, first, let me tell you that there has been great success when it came to welfare reform. We've actually changed the whole culture from dependency to self-sufficiency. [Applause] And, by doing that, the welfare rolls have declined dramatically and the country's better off for it. But, more importantly, so are the human beings.

It's so easy to get caught up in statistics and forget about behind each number is a person. And today, I have the honor of talking about—of hearing from the people involved, the human stories, the real-life stories of people that have overcome incredible obstacles.

I like to tell people, the toughest job in America is a single mom trying to raise her children. That's the hardest hill to climb in this country. And yet, as a result of a collaborative effort of public-private partnership here in Mecklenburg County, a place where government and business teamed up, many people have been moved from dependency upon government to work.

Now, the system worked, but in order for that to happen, it requires a will, a personal determination. Some person has to say, "I can do better and want to do better," just like my introducer, Frances Cunningham, did. She is a single mom with two teenagers. That, in itself deserves a medal. [Laughter] She has started working with the Work First program, [and] obviously has a job. But I want to quote what she said. "The success of it is my children see me go

to work every day. And that makes them go to school every day, because they see mama isn't staying at home."

The ability for somebody to realize [that] kind of an independent life, less dependent upon government, not only affects that person but also affects a lot of other people—starting with the children.

I met with Michelle Venegas. Michelle is articulate. I told her she speaks better English than I do [Laughter] although she got hired as a translator. She's from Mexico, Tijuana, Mexico. She was working for a company that went out of business. She needed a little transition help. She found it here in Mecklenburg County. By the way, she, herself, is a mom, got a little ninita. She went to the county department of social services. She found out they needed someone with Spanish language skills. She's now employed full-time by the department.

Kathleen Collado, I met with her, as well. She's a single mom, recently divorced. She had no high school diploma. Imagine how tough her future looked. She needed to take a step up in life, and she found help. Kathleen was able to get her GED, she polished her interviewing skills, and now works for US Airways.

These are stories that are real. But the good news is, in this county and all across America, they have happened time and time again. There are 20,000 businesses nationwide that have helped 1.1 million people go from welfare to work. It is an essential ingredient of what the future bill ought to look like.

We need to make sure that work

is an integral part of any welfare reauthorization; that the cornerstone of a good bill understands that when we help somebody find work—and I emphasize the help somebody find work—that leads to more independence, more self-esteem, and more joy and hope.

And so, as Congress begins to reauthorize, I want to make sure that work is an integral component and a strong component. As a matter of fact, I believe that within five years, 70 percent of the welfare recipients must work. As part of the requirement, 70 percent of people being helped have got to get to work. And we'll help.

The bill must allow for there to be adequate time for training. Of a five-day work week, three could be devoted to work and two to education and job training. For the tougher cases, there ought to be time set aside exclusively for job training or drug rehabilitation. And high school moms ought to be allowed to get credit for going to high school at the same time as part of their work requirement.

In other words, the system ought to insist upon work, but encourage work by making sure people have got the skills necessary to work, or the help necessary to make them a responsible person in the workplace.

Secondly, our public policy must encourage families. Research shows that two-parent families are more likely to raise a child that is going to go to high school or college, that a child in a two-parent family is less likely to get addicted to drugs.

Now, I understand there are some families that just simply

aren't meant to be. I know that. I'm not wise about that. On the other hand, we ought to aim for a goal, a goal that recognizes the power and importance of two-parent families in America. And, therefore, the budget I'm submitting and the reform that I hope that Congress will insist upon recognizes that premarital counseling can work, conflict resolution after marriage is important, antigambling—help the old man get off the gambling habit—will help. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation can be part of an important concept about keeping families together.

We've got \$300 million—up to \$300 million in the budget to encourage parenting and family programs to flourish at the local level. And, as well, I've got \$135 million in the budget for abstinence education programs.

Now, let me be as candid as I can about this. Abstinence works every time [Laughter] when it comes to making sure somebody may not have an unwanted child or someone picks up sexually transmitted disease. And this society ought to give children the benefit of the doubt. We ought not to assume that our culture is automatically going to lead a child to defy an abstinence education program. We ought to try it. We ought to work hard; we ought to shoot for the ideal in society and not get drug down by the cynics. And so part of making sure that welfare reauthorization is going to achieve objectives is to promote family and to encourage right choices amongst American youth.

Thirdly, we must trust local officials to manage the money neces-

sary to achieve certain objectives and goals. [Applause] We have got to have flexibility at the federal level. Tommy [Thompson] understands that. It's one of the main reasons I asked him to become the Secretary of Health and Human Services. He was a governor; I was a governor. We understand that the more flexibility there is at the local level, the more possible it is to meet local needs and, therefore, meet local and national objectives, to meet goals.

And so one of the things we're going to ask Congress is not to micro-manage the system. There are hundreds of federal welfare programs. For those of you who work in this line of work, you know what I'm talking about—hundreds of them, many of them with incredible hoops that need to be jumped through in order to be able to access funds.

It is not necessary to have hundreds of welfare programs. What's necessary is to make a commitment to set goals, to expect results, and to trust local people in managing the dollars. And that's the spirit of welfare reform.

And we're going to push hard for this initiative in the United States Congress. I can't guarantee 100 percent success, but I can guarantee you, we're going to give it our best shot to make sure that we're able to achieve local objectives, and therefore, realize a national goal. And that is moving as many people as we can, as compassionately as we can, from welfare to work, helping people help themselves...

A White House summary sheet explained that President Bush's

agenda would:

- Help more welfare recipients achieve independence through work.
- Protect children and strengthen families.
- Empower states to seek new and innovative solutions to help welfare recipients achieve independence.
- Provide compassionate food assistance to legal immigrants in need.

These goals would be achieved by:

- Increasing a state's minimum work participation requirements by 5 percent a year until reaching 70 percent of its caseload in 2007. The present requirement is 50 percent for a 30-hour week.
- Requiring welfare recipients to work 40 hours a week (up from the original requirement of 20 hours in 1997) either at a job or in training. The plan makes especial accommodation for parents with infants and individuals who need substantial treatment, rehabilitation, or special work-related training.
- Protecting children by providing historic child care funding (\$4.8 billion a year) through the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- Strengthening Child Support enforcement and encouraging states to relay child support payments to mothers and children. Under current law, government keeps a substantial portion of the money collected to pay past child support in cases of families that have received welfare. (See discussion below.)
- Encouraging healthy marriage and a two-parent married family with up to \$300 million for programs that encourage marriage. These programs include premarital

education and counseling as well as research and technical assistance into finding promising approaches. To encourage innovations by states to help welfare recipients achieve independence by:

- Establishing broad new waiver authority from federal regulations to encourage new approaches.
- Allowing states better to coordinate child care and other noncash support services, now operating under different agencies, different rules, and different requirements.

To provide assistance for legal immigrants in need:

- Allow them to receive food stamps five years after entry into the United States. The rationale: This policy will help to ensure adequate nutrition among children and other vulnerable immigrant groups while continuing to require new entrants to provide for themselves and their families through work.
- But to continue the existing five-year ban against welfare benefits for citizens entering the country after 1996—"ensuring that welfare policy neither allows non-citizens to the U.S. to take advantage of welfare nor induces welfare dependence among non-citizens who do receive welfare benefits."

A *Washington Post* story by Amy Goldstein about the president's announcement made the shrewd observation that Mr. Bush gave both to the right and to the left, likewise seeking to placate both fiscal conservatives and the nation's governors.

For conservatives, there was the new emphasis on marriage as well

as higher work requirements. For liberals, there was more latitude on what constitutes “work.” States may count 16 hours per week—instead of the current 10 hours—as “work,” even if people are using that time for school, addictions treatment, or other preparations to equip them to work. However, Democrats denounced a subtle but significant change concerning vocational training that Bush also is advocating, contending it would halt states’ ability to count such training as work.

For fiscal conservatives, there was the president’s expressed determination not to increase TANF funds. That dismayed liberals, but at least the president resisted conservative demands that funding be cut on grounds that the rolls have dropped. Another appeal to conservative goals came with the Bush “carrot-and stick” proposals for pushing states to fashion “marriage promotion” plans focusing on two-parent families.

Finally, the nation’s governors who actually run the welfare programs welcomed the president’s recommendations for granting more flexibility to the states. (But objections later arose; see Chapter 6.) However, Goldstein reported, key Democrats in Congress were dismayed that the plan would create what they called “an unfunded mandate” by compelling states dramatically to enlarge their job programs without extra federal help.

Next, we present a chart comparing the current system with the president’s proposals and a major piece of competing legislation introduced in Congress, followed by a chapter on various responses to President Bush’s proposals.

Chapter 5 COMPARISONS

We now turn to various reactions at the national level to the Bush proposals for welfare-reform reauthorization. In this chapter, they are particularly embodied in two Congressional bills from the Democratic side, one introduced by U.S. Representative Patsy Mink of Hawaii and the other by U.S. Representative Benjamin Cardin of Maryland.

The following chart was prepared by the Washington-based National Organization for Women’s (NOW) Legal Defense and Education Fund. Another approach—not included in this chart—is the position of the Welfare Made a Difference National Campaign (WMAD), also initiated by NOW. WMAD’s proposal, which differs the most from the Bush proposals, would repeal all time limits, and opposes work requirements. In some ways, the WMAD position seems a call to return to the welfare system as it existed before the welfare reform act of 1996.

The Mink proposal differs the most from the Bush outline offering solutions to many of the views voiced by critics of the present TANF system. The Cardin legislation is more centrist, although both bills differ at key points with the Bush plan.

In the next chapter we turn to Pennsylvania reactions at the state and local levels to the Bush proposals.

Here is the comparison chart prepared by the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1522 K Street NW, Suite 550, Washington, DC 20005:

Current Law	Mink Bill (HR 3113)	Cardin Bill (HR 3625)	Administration's Plan	Funding
<p>The basic federal block grant is authorized at \$16.5 billion per year. It contains TANF Supplemental Grant and a TANF Contingency Fund.</p>	<p>Maintains current block grant amounts but also provides for uncapped federal matching for any state spending in excess or required maintenance of effort levels.</p> <p>Does not address CCDGB</p> <p>Reauthorizes the TANF Supplemental Grant at current levels.</p> <p>Reauthorizes and improves the Fund by lifting the \$2 billion cap.</p>	<p>Adjusts for inflation in future years (increasing annual block grant to \$18.7 by 2007) and increases CCDGB by 11.25B over 5 years.</p> <p>Reauthorizes the TANF Supplemental Grant at current levels.</p> <p>Reauthorizes and improves the Fund by lifting the \$2 billion cap.</p>	<p>Level Funds TANF- does not adjust for inflation. Level Funds CCDGB.</p> <p>Reauthorizes the TANF Supplemental Grant at current levels.</p> <p>Reauthorizes the Contingency Fund without lifting the cap.</p>	
<p>Time Limits</p> <p>5 year federal time limit. States may set shorter limits. States may exempt 20% of caseload.</p>	<p>5 year limit maintained but clock stops for compliance. States may not set shorter limit.</p>	<p>5 year limit but clock does not run in any month a family has earned above a state specified level.</p>	<p>Maintains current law.</p>	
<p>Single Parents Families 50%</p> <p>Two Parent Families 90%</p> <p>But rates reduced based on the percentage reduction in the cash assistance caseload.</p>	<p>Retains current rates</p>	<p>Modifies so that participation rates for single and two-parent families is 50%</p> <p>Replaces Caseload Reduction Credit with an Employment Credit</p>	<p>Modifies so that participation rates for single and two-parent families is 70%</p> <p>Shrinks Caseload Reduction Credit but does not offer an alternative credit to reward states for employing individuals.</p>	Work Participation Rates
<p>Work Hours</p> <p>Single Parents must work 30 hours (20 hours for single parents with children under 6); Two-Parent families must work 35 hours. Allows states to exempt parents with children under 12 months from work requirements.</p>	<p>Retains current work requirements</p>	<p>Retains current work requirements</p>	<p>Increases work requirements to require all individuals to work 40 hours (24 hours direct work activities/16 hours participation requirements).</p> <p>Removes reduced work requirements for parents with children under age 6.</p> <p>Continues to allow states to exempt parents with children under 12 months from direct work requirements, but requires those parents to engage in 16 hours of participation requirements.</p>	

	Current Law	Mink Bill (HR 3113)	Cardin Bill (HR 3625)	Administration's Plan
Education and Training	<u>Caps</u> number of people in high school or vocation education whom a state can count as engaged in a work activity at 30% of all those engaged in a work activity	Removes 30% cap	Removes 30% cap	30% cap remains
	<u>Limits Time</u> vocational education counts to 12 months	Removes 12 month time limit	Replaces with a 24 month limit	12 month time limit remains
	<u>Higher Education</u> not included as a work activity and thus states who have allowed individuals to engage in higher education have done so creating own state system	Explicitly allows all kinds of education (GED, ESL, Post-secondary education) to count as a work activity.	Allows ESL to count towards federal work participation requirements for 10 of the 30 hours required (as education directly related to employment does now)	Increases work requirement from 30 hrs/wk to 40 hr/wk: 24 hr/wk in "work" Allows work related training to count towards the 24 hrs. for a max of 3 months—apparently would allow education or training to count towards 16 hours—but very unlikely in practice given that this plan would necessitate a major shift in resources away from those activities. Creates an opportunity for states to seek waivers for integrating funding and program rules—including for education.
	<u>Time Clock</u> does not stop for educational activities	Stops the clock for compliance with rules- and thus for time engaged in education/training	Does not stop the clock for education/training (labor market participation only)	Does not stop clock
Child Care and Caregiving	<u>Protections</u> Provides protection against sanction for single parents who cannot comply with work requirement due to a lack of childcare for child under 6.	Emphasizes parent's choice about quality care for child. Retains protection up to age 6 and adds protection for : -lack of care for a child with disability/significant health problem -lack of after-school/summer care for child over age 6	Extends protection for individuals who cannot comply with work requirements due to lack of child care to children up to age 3	Appears to retain current level of protection for single custodial parents who have a child under age 6 but who cannot obtain child care

Chapter 6 RESPONSES

Among the various responses to President Bush's proposals, we single out three—nationally, that of many of the governors; in Pennsylvania, that of the State Department of Public Welfare; and in Pittsburgh, that of the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, which with the Institute of Politics held an earlier series of Roundtables involving various social service agencies (see Chapter 3).

Governors

On April 10, 2002, some leading state governors—both Republican and Democrat—raised stern questions about Republican bills introduced mirroring the Bush plan. Their particular complaint was that the Bush proposal would prevent states from designing plans tailored to individual welfare recipients. Vermont Governor Howard Dean, a Democrat, said, "I can't think of any social innovation that has been as successful as changing welfare as we know it. We have a saying in Vermont—if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Dean was joined by a Republican Governor John Engler of Michigan, who urged that states be allowed to retain the power to decide which plan is best, individual by individual. He offered a list of existing state programs that do not fit into the Bush mold and said the best system would be to give states maximum flexibility. The 1996 changes, Engler said, "succeeded because Washington focused on the overarching goals and left the strategies to the states. Give us the tools, and we can deliver."

But Representative J.C. Watts, an Oklahoma Republican, replied that where Democrats define compassion by how many people are in government aid programs, Republicans define compassion as to how few are enrolled. "We've given them the means to climb the ladder of economic opportunity," the African American legislator contended.

Earlier in April, a survey by the National Governors Association showed that state officials felt many of President Bush's welfare proposals were not realistic and would encourage states to place poor people in menial, unproductive jobs to meet stringent new work requirements. They were particularly skeptical of the proposal to continue spending on child care at the current level, \$4.8 billion a year. The state officials said this was unrealistically low in view of the large increase in the number of welfare recipients who would be required to work.

The survey pointed to two other research findings. One by the Congressional Research Service noted that welfare recipients working at least 40 hours a week at the minimum wage would quickly become ineligible for cash assistance in 27 states, including Pennsylvania, Florida, Massachusetts, and Texas.

Another survey, by the American Public Human Services Association, which represents state officials, found that some welfare recipients would have to take two jobs to satisfy the work requirements of the president's proposal. Many of the companies and organizations that hire low-wage workers are looking only for

part-time employees. Also, in many states, the report said, “entry-level jobs in industries most likely to hire welfare recipients are part-time or shift work, on evenings and week-ends,” and companies are “passing up welfare recipients for workers with higher skills.”

But Wade F. Horn, the assistant secretary of Health and Human Services in charge of the welfare program, agreed that the work requirements proposed by the president were “admittedly more challenging and difficult” than the existing requirements. But he added that the comments from state officials indicated “they do not understand what’s in our proposal.” Of the 40 hours, Horn said, 24 hours would have to be actual work or on-the-job training, but 16 hours could be “constructive activities” like community service or education.

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

Turning to Pennsylvania, responses to the Bush proposals from the state DPW center around three issues. They were outlined by David Florey, director of employment and training programs, and Ed Zogby, director of policy, for the Office of Income Maintenance.

Hours of Working

Florey said the department is not convinced that the president’s push for a 40-hour week (24 of work itself and 16 of work-related activities) “will achieve the desired outcome.” Nor, he said, does the new goal of increasing the number of people on welfare working—to 70 percent from the current 50.

For one thing, the proposals don’t take into account the increased cost of providing child care—perhaps double the present outlay—in an arena where it already is difficult to find adequate facilities. Given that the president is holding flat the budget for TANF—including the \$719 million yearly allocated to Pennsylvania—that money would have to be found elsewhere in the state budget.

Florey and Zogby say that Pennsylvania has done an outstanding job of helping people move off the welfare rolls. Now it faces two continuing problem-beset groups. One is the client who comes in only when there is a crisis in her life. Far more difficult is the “multiple-barriers” sector into which DPW now is moving—those who for reasons of mental health, drug or alcohol addiction, and inability to function in the workplace are never going to be able to work. In a sense, the proposed requirements would propel the DPW and its county agencies into the 20 percent so-called “carve-out” zone of clients exempted under the 1996 law for those reasons. The danger is that pushing too far into unrealistic expectations could muddy the success obtained thus far.

Education

Pennsylvania in the first two years requires a work-related activity. But it doesn’t have an hours-per-week requirement the third year.

However, education and training must be pointed directly at job attainment. One blunt explanation could be: The DPW is not running some kind of scholarship program. Still, as Florey and Zogby explained, “There are

many resources available for people to continue secondary education. Our objective is to help clients launch occupational and educational careers.”

Marriage Promotion

The DPW has found that children from households with married parents do better. Indeed, the DPW already has been working with what it calls “fatherhood” initiatives. It has a couple of projects in hospitals for the moment where both unmarried parents may be present in joy at the birth of their baby. Obviously, they can’t be forced to marry, but this has proven to be an ideal time for encouraging couples to move in that direction.

The DPW also has an extensive program for teenage parents, both in and out of school. Specific programs at bringing fathers into the picture are under way in Erie, Centre County, and Pittsburgh (see Chapter 8 for a description of the Fathers Collaborative out of the University of Pittsburgh). Building on its work thus far, Florey and Zogby feel that Pennsylvania can wisely use its share of the \$300 million for marriage promotion proposed by Mr. Bush. Of course, once again, with no increase in overall TANF funding, supportive money inevitably will be coming out of other welfare-reform categories.

Further comments by Florey and Zogby cast light on DPW initiatives.

Lessons from Pittsburgh’s GAPS Program

While the GAPS findings required no major course changes, the DPW put \$20 million into programs suggested by the GAPS outcomes. The latter

have brought a stronger emphasis on such matters as these:

- The critical importance of case management, especially of work-based case management. “The caseworker has to be out, proactive, not just sitting at the desk.” Indeed, this has been a major benefit of TANF itself and of the GAPS lesson, that DPW caseworkers have been given a new vision of their role.
- At the same time, the importance of using grass-roots workers from communities themselves, including persons from what some would call store-front organizations. “We’ve found it quite appropriate and productive to use people from the communities.”
- The use from time to time of monetary or other incentives, especially where a hardship comes up, such as a failing car that makes it impossible to reach the job.

In sum, an important aspect of TANF is that it has caused community colleges, transportation agencies, and child care providers to recognize that there are folks out there trying to better themselves. So child care providers are providing alternate hours, such as at night when a mother will be working. Transportation agencies have altered bus schedules to fit with odd work schedules that welfare newcomers to the work force often have to accept.

“We need to keep the forward momentum going, with measured outcomes, but with as much flexibility as possible.” In conversing with these DPW officials, one senses they are not quite sure that that is where the president’s proposals will take them.

Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board

This agency, along with the Institute of Politics, held a series of Roundtables (see Chapter 3) anticipating welfare-reform reauthorization. Since those sessions were held prior to President Bush's Feb. 27, 2002, announcement of his welfare reform proposals, the TRWIB has issued an amended statement, as follows:

We applaud the president's proposal to maintain funding at current levels. However, we have the following concerns about other aspects of the agenda:

- The proposed three-month maximum duration of drug and alcohol treatment is too short, given that serious drug and alcohol dependency constitutes the principal barrier to work for many long-term welfare recipients.
- Requiring every state to have 70 percent of its welfare caseload engaged in work within five years ignores the fact that long-term welfare recipients are the hardest to employ. This requirement would be particularly difficult for states to achieve, given that they would no longer be able to claim credit against the participation rate for those who have left welfare for work.
- The \$300 million proposed for programs to promote marriage is of concern because it would divert funds away from other programs and may promote solutions that are not in the best interests of all TANF recipients.

Next: More minuses and pluses expressed locally.

Chapter 7 CONCERNS

U.S. Representative Melissa Hart obviously was hoping for positive responses concerning the welfare-to-work program in a hearing she held in Cranberry, Butler County, on March 26, 2002. Instead, the Republican congresswoman received a barrage of complaints about TANF, despite her attempts to coax out more affirmation about what has happened.

Part of this reaction consisted of complaints about hardships caused for many clients in the welfare-to-work approach of the past seven years. But much of the unhappiness had been aroused by the Bush administration's plans for reauthorizing the 1996 law (see Chapter 4). The Hart hearing and subsequent reactions locally have largely paralleled the responses of many national activist groups. The single exception concerns the items on immigrants, not an important factor in the Southwestern Pennsylvania milieu.

To be sure, Marc Cherna speaks for many in being relieved that the Bush administration at least is not reducing funding in its call for reauthorization. Cherna is human services director for Allegheny County. He and many others feared that the very success in cutting the welfare case load would be used as an excuse for trimming funding.

At the same time, Cherna and others are concerned that flat federal funding will be insufficient for the stepped-up requirements in the Bush plan, particularly as the welfare-to-work progress runs into the hard core—the multiple-barrier recipients.

Furthermore, because the flat-funding proviso doesn't take into account cost of living (COLA) increases, the result may be cuts in innovative nonconventional programs such as the transportation changes in Allegheny County described in Chapter 2.

Three areas of concern are repeatedly mentioned in Pittsburgh—time limits, educational opportunities, and marriage-formation proposals.

It must be borne in mind that some responses come from groups that have disliked welfare-to-work from the beginning, feeling it tears the mother away from caring for the children, something they consider especially questionable in the case of children under the age of two.

Others hope to use the reauthorization process as a launching pad for a discussion of poverty in general—not just for TANF clients—and what society should be doing to alleviate it. But the majority of objections come from people comfortable enough with the 1996 law and the way it has worked but worried that the Bush proposals are pushing luck too far—that they will curdle the successes already achieved.

Time Limits

The let-well-enough-alone concern is particularly strong concerning the Bush proposals for upping the agency requirements for work participation to 70 percent from 50 percent of persons on the rolls and for the clients themselves to 40 hours from 30 hours.

Jane Downing, a senior program officer for The Pittsburgh Foundation, makes the perceptive comment

that meeting these quotas might force state and county welfare agencies to create make-work government programs. That would negate the attribute that has brought so much praise for the welfare-to-work program to date—that it has put people in “real” jobs in the private sector. If “just jobs” had been the goal, that could have been achieved years ago with the establishment of the kind of government make-work programs that created so much skepticism and ill will within the electorate.

A nearly universal response is that more attention needs to be paid to child care. The welfare-to-work experience, as well as the GAPS study, both demonstrates the shortage of well-run day-care centers and particularly those kinds meeting the off-hours requirements of women working odd-hour shifts such as during the night. But, as pointed out in Chapter 2, even well meant attempts in that direction have run into the problems for children when shifting from the home bed some nights to the day care center bed other nights.

Furthermore, knowledgeable people in the field feel that the Bush administration and Congress need to realize the importance of providing resources for more child care as the effort proceeds to move hard-core welfare recipients to jobs.

Transportation needs also have been brought to the fore. Here, fortunately, a local task force on the subject has been able to take some important steps, such as new bus routes and the addition of circulating vans (see Chapter 2).

Educational Opportunities

This subject brings the sharpest disagreement with Bush proposals and, indeed, welfare department practices.

At stake is the question of whether the welfare-to-work effort should include provisions for continued education for women going off welfare. As one critic put it, if the only future for a woman is in a low-level entry job, why go off welfare? The disdain of some welfare activists for mere “hamburger flipper” jobs has been proved wrong, as these slots often are the key to entering the work force. But the welfare-to-work 1996 law didn’t sufficiently take into account the financial and psychological need to move up the job ladder, including both secondary and postsecondary education.

What the TANF program has demonstrated is that many women on welfare had latent talents that were brought to the surface when they took jobs. But it also has shown they have become discouraged at finding that their lack of education is blocking any advancement.

Again, the GAPS study demonstrated the need for adding skills to bolster job retention and advancement. Time to study for a GED or to attend community college classes to enhance skills is a must in this regard.

Here is where current practices and holes in the Bush proposals are counterproductive. They do nothing to alleviate, let alone improve, the present system of current time limits that push women away from skills-training opportunities and into work. As one appraisal puts it, the gap is accentuated in that under the current

law, the DPW is not running a scholarship program. Some of the regulations are designed to make sure there aren’t “perpetual students” avoiding actually taking a job. But these fears of fostering goof-off time are cramping many legitimate efforts by women to move upward in the job stream.

Furthermore, the Bush proposals for requiring women to work 40 hours per week, instead of 30 hours, will shorten even more the hours available for education. That is, an upwardly mobile TANF mother would have to work a regular 40 hours and then carve out time for taking courses and for time with her offspring—a backbreaking prospect.

Critics insist that it is hard to imagine anything more shortsighted in terms of enabling women to stay off welfare and to increase their earning capacity.

Marriage Formation

The reaction to this portion of the Bush administration proposals deserves a chapter of its own, described next.

Chapter 8 WELFARE WEDDINGS?

Clearly, from the reactions to the Bush proposals voiced in the previous chapters, the marriage issue is one of the hottest. Its basic change would be adding two words to the pertinent provision in the 1996 law, which called for the “formation and encouragement of two-parent families.” The Bush administration would like this clause to include the extra words: “*healthy, two-parent married families.*”

In actuality, Pennsylvania may not be affected, at least in the short run. Timothy Cornell, head of the DPW’s Allegheny County office, says the scuttlebutt is that five states will be selected for the family-formation experiments. He doubts that Pennsylvania would agree to be one. But when Congresswoman Melissa Hart at her March 26, 2002, hearing in Cranberry queried Cornell on the subject, he replied that those really interested in marriage formation should start with the Internal Revenue Service regulations that penalize marriage.

A telling comment on the subject came in a *Washington Post* article by reporter Amy Goldstein, suggesting that Bush’s marriage proposal was a sop to the political Right to balance concessions made to the Left.

There is general agreement that a two-parent family is preferable, all things considered. But welfare activists and some feminists fear that what really is at stake is celibacy, with such conservative groups as the Roman Catholic Church against the use of artificial contraceptives and

abortion. These positions run against the tenets of pro-choice activists, who hold that a woman should be the one who decides what to do with her body, including the above measures. Also, some opponents bridle at the idea that a single parent isn’t perfectly capable of raising a good family.

As Goldstein in another article points out, “The issue has put Democrats in an awkward position, uncomfortable with the president’s plans but reluctant to sound as if they oppose marriage.”

Goldstein outlined the controversy as having many strands: Is it the government’s business to advocate marriage? Is marriage an effective route away from poverty? Is it proper for states to spend welfare money to try to improve relationships among more affluent people, as well as the poor? And do programs intended to produce sound marriages really work?

Examples of such programs:

- In six Michigan counties, single women on welfare who have a baby are required to take 24 hours of classes on how to be a good parent and “create a stable family.”
- In West Virginia, 1,800 welfare families are being paid a \$100 monthly bonus because married parents are rearing the children.
- Utah gives every couple that applies for a marriage license a free 20-minute video on “the three C’s” for a strong relationship—commitment, communication, and conflict-resolving skills.

Proponents of the Bush plan point out that its purpose is to provide \$300 million to the states to

experiment with programs that try to increase the proportion of children growing up in “married-couple” families. The idea is to see what will work, rather than sending down a fiat on the subject. And they point out that many of the groups now raising objections are the same ones who fought welfare reform from the start, predicting all kinds of disaster that haven’t ensued. In fact, as a *New York Times* Week in Review column analyzed the matter, the battle over reauthorizing the 1996 welfare act is nowhere as contentious as it was six years ago, with a general acceptance that it has worked better than anticipated.

Yet, the marriage issue, with such concomitant issues as morality and child custody, may prove to be the battleground this time.

Not mentioned by Goldstein in her *Washington Post* article is another factor—the general debate over earlier proposals to fund faith-based organizations to carry forward social programs. This has raised questions about breaching the wall between church and state, not to mention secular charity organizations worried about splitting the funding pie all the more—issues brought to the fore in a June 1, 2001, seminar sponsored by the Institute of Politics and the William J. Copeland Fund titled, “Faith-based Organizations in the Social Services System: National and Local Issues.”

The significance of the marriage issue also is that it can be the fulcrum for debate as to whether the Bush administration and other activists for more welfare-reform are pushing their luck into areas where the tools to

achieve success and to measure it are dubious at best.

For instance, there is the question of whether holding a bad marriage together is necessarily good for the children, let alone the spouses, especially if child or spousal abuse is present in the marriage. It must be remembered, too, that many marriages are second marriages, with all the complications of stepchildren relations that sometimes can be harmful for the offspring.

Some rights groups also want gay and lesbian “marriages” to count as providing viable households for the raising of children. The question of the state legalizing such relationships is in itself a hot topic.

But, overall, some of the controversy arises because of the fears of some feminists that the idea of “marriage” will be straitjacketed to the husband-wife-children model that was the norm until the last half of the 20th century. Whether that model is any longer realistic across the spectrum is the question they raise.

Some statistics at this point might be helpful. Andrew Hacker in a magazine review-essay in *The New York Review of Books*, April 11, 2002, points out that among women who are now raising children of their own, fully 43.3 percent have never been married, in contrast to 6.8 percent a generation ago. “As for the fathers, fewer of them feel pressured or obliged, let alone inclined, to wed the women they made pregnant. So today, brides with a baby on the way are less frequent.”

That factor, Hacker believes, is the reason that abortions have

been declining from the height of 1.6 million in 1990 to around 1.3 million in 1997, the most recent solid benchmark. He comments: "Even Planned Parenthood does not believe that clamoring pickets and restrictive regulations have had much to do with the drop. One reason is that contraceptive use is up, even if only modestly, encouraged by fears of AIDS and other venereal risks.

"Also, with an aging population, there are fewer teenagers and young women to have unwanted pregnancies; teenagers' share of all abortions has dropped dramatically. But the chief cause has been an increasing choice by unmarried girls and women to complete their pregnancies and take the babies home; which has lifted non-marital births to an all-time high."

In 1970, half of all non-marital births were to teenagers. By 1999, they had declined to 29.3 percent, mostly because more unwed births are to older women.

Now, one American child in three is born to unmarried parents, whereas in 1960 the figure was one in twenty. Hacker reports that for white births, the out-of-wedlock ratio is 22.1 percent, and each year it moves closer to the black rate, now 69.1 percent.

One reason given for the situation in the black community is the paucity of marriageable black men. Hacker writes that that is "owing to imprisonment, addiction, and early mortality." The often-draconian sentences for possession of marijuana and other drugs puts many men behind bars for long periods, taking them out of the marriage market. Clearly, any remedy in this field will

require a less stringent view of minor drug offenses, a major policy change but probably essential in realistically promoting marriageability.

For instance, a man with a criminal record, even if it is connected to the nonviolent use of drugs, is barred from public housing and finds that procuring a job is most difficult. A Pittsburgh welfare-rights activist argues that the best way to promote marriage is to give the man a job with a living wage so he can support a family.

But even leaving aside the questions of imprisonment, addiction, and early mortality, expectations have changed. Hacker writes, "The great majority of men should still be considered 'marriageable,' if what is wanted is a steady job or the prospect of securing one. But now a great deal more is expected, apart from his not being violent or alcoholic or mentally unbalanced.

"Today, women who are contemplating marriage set higher standards for possible husbands than their mothers and grandmothers did. They find all too many men self-centered, wary of commitment, just plain boring and lacking cultural interests. This may explain, at least in part, why twice as many women are reaching their forties without marrying, which is twice the figure for a generation ago, while most heterosexual men *are* married by their thirties."

If this is true across the spectrum, imagine how it impacts on hopes for persuading people at the welfare level to get married.

Finally, of course, there is "the sweet mystery of life," the drive of

romance that leads many people to get married. It is hard to imagine this being legislated.

A more positive attitude toward what is being called “family formation” comes from Annette Green, a senior program officer at The Pittsburgh Foundation who has been involved in its influential GAPS study. Green’s personal assessment:

“I think there will be a great response nationally to the idea of family formation and supporting marriage. I don’t think that we can ignore that there has been an increase in marriages since welfare reform started. Clearly, all the studies show that two-parent homes are better for children, even if there is a fair amount of discord in the home. Over time longitudinally, children in a two-parent home achieve more and have less emotional duress.

“Our society has really lost ground because of the stress and pressures of everyday living, and no time for parents to communicate values to the children. Studies have shown that most teenagers get less than two family meals together per week; yet the dinner table historically is a place where parents can communicate values.

“I think the Bush administration may look to faith-based organizations to be especially helpful in the area of family formation, providing positive and child-supporting values. This must be done without proselytizing for a particular faith or form of belief,” Green added, touching upon a point of much concern (see above).

“Of course it does no good to force people to marry or to stay together if they don’t want to...But the

point I want to make is that there is so much that could be gained by finding ways to achieve more two-parent households,” Green contends.

An interesting insight into the future plus-or-minus for the Bush marriage promotion proposal comes from the Fathers Collaborative, one of the DPW-supported programs mentioned in Chapter 6. The Fathers Collaborative, on a \$500,000 DPW grant, is operated by the University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Child Development, with Kathy Rudy as project manager.

Rudy explains that the ultimate goal is to improve the lives of the children involved in broken families and unwed relationships. “We are not here to match make. It’s impossible—any time you try to force a relationship based on sexual activity,” Rudy says, indicating her program would not fit that Bush goal.

The processes are (1) a holistic approach to the father’s needs so as to move him into a viable role in society, economically, and otherwise and (2) to seek an accommodation between custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers for access to and visitation arrangements with the children.

For the first goal, the Fathers Collaborative tries to take the young father into manhood by acting as a streamlined point of entry for services in the system. These include housing; dealing with criminal records; learning financial responsibility techniques; and job education and learning about keeping a job and job advancement through such agencies as Goodwill Industries.

Even though the welfare mother gets only \$50 of whatever the father pays in child support, “Our deal is that you have the responsibility, no matter where the money goes.” The Fathers Collaborative provides legal services, but doesn’t represent the father in court.

These fathers, whenever possible and appropriate, are tied in with the Male Initiative of the Head Start program for preschool children.

But along with these self-improvement efforts, the Fathers Initiative also tries to broker arrangements for the father to have a part in the life of his child. Can this “family system” of service be successful? Rudy is cautious on that point, although pointing out the goal for the first year to work with 150 fathers eventually brought in more than 400 men, with many referrals from employers and family members. Already, her team has been flown to Nebraska to help launch a similar program there.

The family-formation initiative brings these comments from Tim Snyder, executive director of the Parental Stress Center in Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood.

If given a huge sum of money, say \$1 million, Snyder would spend half on family unification services. The other half would go to real community centers, in the old-fashioned sense of a gym, a library, and support for anyone in the family. He feels that the rise of senior centers, however valuable in their own right, often times are seen as representing a community center. “But the [public] money is not going to help the kids; it’s a kind of bait and switch.”

As to family unification services, Snyder proposes individual family support, especially geared to keep a family from falling part. “This is pre-breakup; we now tend to spend money *after* the fact.” In a sense, this would be a modern version of traditional family counseling, with some activities family by family; others on a group education basis. Some possibilities: As a whole family, learn how to use computers and how to read.

In some cases, anger-management programs would be helpful. Depoliticizing the relationship between the parents is always something that should be attempted.

If such efforts fail, try to help the parents amicably work out such details as where the children will spend Thanksgiving or Christmas. Such provisions can be essential in terms of providing continuity and stability for the children after the breakup. Second, find ways to concentrate on the prebirth period working with a mother and a father to seek the best for the coming child.

Snyder notes that because the social fabric has changed, one-third of kids now have a name that differs from the parent. Not only is there a huge proportion of single parents, but there are many “blended” families, with a second marriage or the evolving of a new household relationship. There now not only are biracial relationships, but bisexual as well. And single persons adopting a child, including foreign babies, is a difficult role in itself.

Because people now decide for themselves what kind of family they will have, Snyder believes that any

attempt to recapture the idealized family by legislation is ill conceived. “How do you legislate morality?”

Child Support Payments

The experimental projects the Bush administration is talking about should include efforts to clear away economic and other obstacles to the combination of romance and realism that leads to enduring marriages. One such barrier is that of child support, a term practitioners in the field prefer to the oft-used term “child custody payments.”

The drive in recent years to track down noncustodial parents, usually the fathers, and getting them to pay child support has been highly successful. But that very success is creating second thoughts about its effects on the relationships between the absent parent and the children.

The problem is that by law in different states only a portion of the money procured from a noncustodial parent goes to the custodial parent. Note: None of the support payment goes to pay for child-support enforcement. That program is supported entirely by federal taxpayers’ dollars through what is called IV-D funding.

In Pennsylvania, the support money goes to the Welfare Department. That’s because a custodial parent when applying for public assistance must agree to assign any child support she receives to the DPW. However, if the support is paid on time, \$50 goes to the parent in what is called “the support pass-through.” If the support payment exceeds the monthly grant, the grant is terminated so that all the support can go to the

plaintiff (custodial parent). Note that even if the cash grant is terminated because of the size of the support payment, the family may still be eligible for medical assistance (Medicaid), food stamps, subsidized child care and/or subsidized housing.

But for the absent father, all of this creates increasing frustration. A *New York Times* article by Claire Harden lays out the problems this way:

“If a poor father pays child support to the state, it typically keeps the money to pay itself back for welfare benefits paid to his children. As a result, his children and their mother see no tangible evidence that the father is helping their lives. If he gives money to his family under the table, which greatly improves his relations with the mother and often allows him more time with his children, it does nothing to reduce his legal child-support obligations. Instead, a father often finds himself living as an invisible man, working in the underground economy as his child-support arrears, with interest running at 12 percent in some states, mount ever higher.”

In many a case, the father feels that in return for his payments, barriers to access to his children should be lifted. That makes him bitter about the whole process. And his spouse is often equally bitter because so little money is being added to her income.

This situation is creating tensions that make it all the harder for the noncustodial parent to have access to his children in any meaningful way. So in the words of the *New York Times* article on the subject, the “success” in collecting support is backfiring.

A Pittsburgh viewpoint on this subject is illuminating. It comes from Linda C. Liechty, administrator of the Adult Section of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. First, Liechty reiterates, no money from child support payments goes toward enforcement of the law. Funding for that purpose comes from authorization found in the Social Security Act, Title IV-D. In Pennsylvania, every county has a Domestic Relations Section that is responsible for establishing and enforcing child support obligations, using IV-D money. In Allegheny County, the Allegheny County Law Department serves as IV-D counsel. The county has a 65 percent collection rate. Some other counties run as high as 70-80 percent, with the result that Pennsylvania with a 72.5 percent rate overall does far better than the national average of 50 percent.

Support obligations are calculated on the basis of net income of both parties. Deviations from the guideline amount are permitted for any reason justice demands, including, for example, the needs of a disabled child.

Second, the pursuit of custody payments can be difficult, especially if the plaintiff (usually the mother) strongly dislikes the defendant. The county's lawyers not only have to deal with divorced parents but also nonmarried parents, the latter about one-third of all cases.

Most plaintiffs are not represented by a lawyer, neither a private nor an IV-D-attorney. Sometimes the defendant will argue that he is not the father. The remedy: Both parties and child, or in rare cases, the defendant

and child only, will be given a genetic test using a large swab inside the cheek for DNA. That process produces a definitive answer within a month.

The toughest situation, of course, is when the defendant runs away, especially if the plaintiff doesn't know his social security number or date of birth. An action can be filed, producing a state-by-state computer check that often can unearth him anyway. Still, sometimes the noncustodial parent has "gone to ground," disappearing without a trace. The sad result, Liechty says, is a loss for the custodial parent. "If the defendant can't be found, the plaintiff will not receive any money."

We now turn to some observations about the welfare-to-work reauthorization effort.

Chapter 9

OBSERVATIONS

Clearly, as the debate over reauthorizing the 1996 welfare-to-work act takes place, the general atmosphere in 2002 concerning welfare is much less bitter than in the mid-90s when reform legislation was being considered. It is a tribute to state governments, their welfare departments, employers, training institutions, and the welfare clients themselves that the TANF program has been so successful in terms of so many clients' lives, as well as of public perception.

But the Bush administration proposals (outlined in Chapter 4) have roiled the picture, with many seeing them pushing the limits to a counterproductive degree (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Conversely, among the critics are those who point to pain for many vulnerable people and therefore would like to roll back the 1996 law. Many critics also see the reauthorization process as an opportunity to enlarge the debate to addressing poverty in general.

The debate largely centers around three aspects of the Bush plan and subsequent Republican bills to implement it.

The first is *time limits*. The proposed changes would that is, require TANF clients to work 40 hours, up from 30, and for state welfare departments to increase to 70 percent from 50 percent the percentage of clients going to work.

Along with many others, it seems to me that the Bush administration is pushing its luck here by setting requirements so high that they

become counterproductive. The very success of TANF has meant that most of the easy cases have been placed in jobs; remaining is the multiple-barrier population, including those with severe handicaps or those who are chronic substance abusers. Without more money, states may have to establish government-subsidized programs to meet their quotas. This make-work provision would undercut the very heralded success of welfare reform to date in placing people in jobs in the private sector.

Furthermore, it is interesting that a Republican administration with a professed interest in federalism is now seeking to curb the states, whose varied approaches fitted to their own circumstances have made TANF work so well.

Observation: Leave well enough alone.

Second is *furthering educational opportunities*. If welfare reform is to succeed in the long run, there should be opportunities for TANF clients to have the time and resources for more job training and formal education to better their chances for job retention and advancement in the job market. This aspect should include postsecondary as well as secondary education. Here we have a shortcoming in the present law, as well as in the Bush proposals.

Steps can be taken to assure that such time for further training is not used as an excuse to avoid going to work. But the federal and state governments should be willing to meet more than halfway those women who want to improve their employability

and the lot of their families, rather than falling back into the welfare system.

Observation: The law should be altered to pay more attention to offering educational opportunities for welfare clients to improve their working life both in terms of job retention and job advancement.

Marriage formation. Any experiments that can foster settled two-parent homes for the good of children are to be encouraged. Obviously, going into marriage or staying in a bad one should never be forced. And one can be skeptical that spending huge amounts of money can produce tangible results.

But the Bush plan for financing experiments in a few states seems a sensible approach. And as for skepticism, some of it smacks of the same resistance that met the advent of the 1996 law.

One other note: Conservatives in pushing for marriage as a stabilizing influence would do well to reconsider their resistance to legalizing the marriages of gays and lesbians. Many such couples have shown the ability to provide a happy, supportive home for children they adopt.

Observation: Hope the marriage formation experiments provide some answers, but don't expect too much.

Finally, liberals hoping to translate the reauthorization struggle into a full attack on poverty should take care lest they overreach as much as conservatives are doing on the "time

limits" factor. For the time being, they would be wise in their battle against poverty to pursue efforts to enroll the poor in programs already in place, as described by the Urban Institute proposals in Chapter 2.

In sum, welfare-to-work has succeeded amazingly well. What is needed at this point is to consolidate the gains, enlarge educational opportunities for achieving TANF parents, and fashion initiatives to address the multiple-barrier portions remaining on the welfare rolls. Let federalism have its best showcase to date by allowing the states continued leeway in these matters.

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