

Welfare in Utah: What Programs are Available and How Have Federal Reforms Affected Them?

Research Report #652, July 2002

Lesson Summary

This report catalogs and summarizes each of the federal assistance programs that are commonly referred to as “welfare” and how the reform legislation of 1996 has impacted these programs. The report also places a dollar value on the average monthly benefit Utah’s welfare participants receive. Finally, the report compares minimum wage, Utah’s average hourly wage and the wage rates of entry-level jobs in Utah to the Federal Poverty Level to determine how far the average Utah family is from living in poverty.

Related Websites

- United States Department of Health and Human Services: www.dhhs.gov
- Utah Department of Workforce Services: <http://jobs.utah.gov/>
- Center for Public Policy Analysis: www.cppa.utah.edu

Utah Core Curriculum

- U.S. History SIS #6250
STD. 6250-10
Obj. 6250-1001
Analyze the gap between the “affluent society and the other America.”
- U.S. Government SIS #6210
STD 6210-03
Obj. 6210-0302
Explore the role of government.

This lesson plan is provided by Utah Foundation to assist in using the accompanying Research Report in high school or middle school classes. Please feel free to copy the Research Report for your students.

Find overhead masters for this lesson on our website at: www.utahfoundation.org/schools.

Vocabulary

Ancillary: supporting or secondary.

Anecdotal: based on or consisting of unscientific observations.

Auspices: sponsorship, patronage, support.

Counter-cyclical: working in the opposite direction of a business cycle—if the economy is slowing down, a counter-cyclical activity speeds up.

Divergent: varying from the norm or the comparison group.

Latitude: freedom from narrow restrictions or definitions.

Marginalize: to relegate an individual to a low status within a society or group.

Matrix: a mathematical set of assumptions in which an equation or formula are created.

Stigmatize: to characterize or mark as disgraceful.

Waiver: formal permission to act outside designated guidelines without penalty.

Quick Questions

1. What does PRWORA stand for?

Answer: The **P**ersonal **R**esponsibility and **W**ork **O**pportunity **R**econciliation **A**ct of 1996 commonly referred to as “welfare reform”.

2. What is the main difference between TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and the old AFDC program?

Answer: TANF payments are for a limited time while AFDC was guaranteed for as long as the client needed it. Recipients are expected to engage in work activities.

3. Where does Utah rank in the nation for the percent of children receiving TANF and the percent living in poverty?

Answer: 48th and 46th.

4. What are the three federal food programs available for low-income families?

Answer: Food Stamps, School Lunch and WIC (Women, Infants and Children).

5. Briefly describe how eligibility for Utah’s Medicaid program differs for applicants who receive TANF and those do not receive TANF.

Answer: TANF participants who apply for Medicaid have higher monthly income limits than other low-income people that apply for the program. This creates a situation where the non-TANF individual has a more difficult time meeting Medicaid eligibility.

6. Which county in Utah has the highest percentage of subsidized housing units? Which has the lowest?

Answer: Highest-Carbon
Lowest-Uintah or Kane

7. What is the monthly value of the ‘average’ welfare benefit package?

Answer: \$736

8. Define the Federal Poverty Level.

Answer: The Federal Poverty Level is a dollar figure based on family size that determines if a family is poor or not, and therefore, whether they are eligible for government benefits.

9. What is included under the definition of work activities for TANF recipients?

Answer: Paid, unsubsidized work, and subsidized internships. Also, education, job training and workshops may be included.

10. Because of insufficient funding, not all eligible families receive government assistance. Where else do they go for help?

Answer: Religious and non-profit social service communities.

Critical Thinking Activities

1. Using the information in Figure 21 and your local newspaper, try to draw up a monthly budget for each hypothetical welfare recipient. Use the newspaper to determine how much she would pay in rent in your area, what food would cost, etc. Try to include items not considered in Figure 21 such as transportation costs, phone service, and other necessities. What items did you include in your budget? What items did you leave out? Why? List the places in your area she might go to for additional assistance (i.e. the local food bank or free health clinic).
2. You are the administrator of Utah's CHIP program. You receive \$3 million from the federal government with the expectation that money will provide health insurance for 50,000 children. During your enrollment period, 60,000 children apply. You cannot apply to the federal government for any more money. How do you resolve the shortfall? How would you justify these cuts to recipients and interested parties, such as advocacy groups or state officials?
3. Review the situation in your local area; do the federal programs listed in the report meet all the needs of your low-income residents? If not, what is not being addressed? Now, choose one need and create a program to address it. How would you determine if someone was eligible to participate? How would you ensure that participants were not abusing your program's benefits? How would you publicize your program?

Quiz Page

Vocabulary

Ancillary	Divergent	Stigmatize
Anecdotal	Latitude	Waiver
Auspices	Marginalize	
Counter-cyclical	Matrix	

Quick Questions

1. What does PRWORA stand for?
2. What is the main difference between TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and the old AFDC program?
3. Where does Utah rank in the nation for the percent of children receiving TANF and the percent living in poverty?
4. What are the three federal food programs available for low-income families?
5. Briefly describe how eligibility for Utah's Medicaid program differs for applicants who receive TANF and those do not receive TANF.
6. Which county in Utah has the highest percentage of subsidized housing units? Which has the lowest?
7. What is the monthly value of the 'average' welfare benefit package?
8. Define the Federal Poverty Level.
9. What is included under the definition of work activities for TANF recipients?
10. Because of insufficient funding, not all eligible families receive government assistance. Where else do they go for help?