CalWORKs and Child Welfare

Case Management for Public Child Welfare Workers

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CalSWEC PREFACE

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) is the nation’s largest state coalition of social work educators and practitioners. It is a consortium of the state’s 20 accredited schools of social work, the 58 county departments of social services and mental health, the California Department of Social Services, and the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

The primary purpose of CalSWEC is an educational one. Our central task is to provide specialized education and training for social workers who practice in the field of public child welfare. Our stated mission, in part, is “to facilitate the integration of education and practice.” But this is not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to improve the lives of children and families who are the users and the purpose of the child welfare system. By educating others and ourselves, we intend a positive result for children: safety, a permanent home, and the opportunity to fulfill their developmental promise.

To achieve this challenging goal, the education and practice-related activities of CalSWEC are varied: recruitment of a diverse group of social workers, defining a continuum of education and training, engaging in research and evaluation of best practices, advocating for responsive social policy, and exploring other avenues to accomplish the CalSWEC mission. Education is a process, and necessarily an ongoing one involving interaction with a changing world. One who hopes to practice successfully in any field does not become “educated” and then cease to observe and learn.
To foster continuing learning and evidence-based practice within the child welfare field, CalSWEC funds a series of curriculum sections that employ varied research methods to advance the knowledge of best practices in child welfare. These sections, on varied child welfare topics, are intended to enhance curriculum for Title IV-E graduate social work education programs and for continuing education of child welfare agency staff. To increase distribution and learning throughout the state, curriculum sections are made available through the CalSWEC Child Welfare Resource Library to all participating schools and collaborating agencies.

The section that follows has been commissioned with your learning in mind. We at CalSWEC hope it serves you well.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the parents and children who shared with us their experiences, including the triumphs and challenges they have faced. This project has been made possible because of their willingness to let us into their daily lives.

In the creation of this curriculum, we have benefited enormously from the support of the California Social Work Education Center, along with the Stuart Foundations and the Urban Institute. Rob Geen, Jennifer Ehrle, and Freya Sonenstein, along with Pat Reynolds Harris, offered their insights on the effects of welfare reform as the study progressed. We are appreciative of our collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley’s Survey Research Center (SRC), and thank SRC staff members, particularly Madonna Camel, Lisa Kermish, and Henry Brady. Additionally, this curriculum and the study that supported it could not have been completed without the help of the Alameda County Social Services Agency management and staff. Many members of this agency were essential to the recruitment process for the study, and we would like to especially thank Melissa Lim Brodowski, Tom Clancy, Donna DeAngelis, and Linda Fuchs. Within the Center for Social Services Research, Karie Frasch was an integral part of the consultation team as the study progressed.

The findings included in this curriculum are based on a small-sample, qualitative study of families affected by welfare reform. The study design allows for a rich description of these families' experiences and sheds light on some possible effects of welfare reform on child welfare. However, the findings are not generalizable to a larger population of

welfare participants or families involved with child welfare services. Any errors or omissions with respect to the analysis presented here are the responsibility of the authors.
PROJECT OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

In the early years of welfare reform, child advocates and observers have expressed concern over the unknown, but most likely negative, impact of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) on families in general, and the child welfare population specifically. Worries include the possibility that decreased levels of economic support and increased behavioral expectations of parents will cause greater numbers of poor families to end up in the child protection system (Courtney, 1997; Knitzer & Bernard, 1997; Shook, 1999) and that new economic and social conditions could lessen the likelihood of family reunification and preservation. The possibility of positive reform-related effects have also been considered (Kamerman & Kahn, 1997), but little emphasized except in the arena of service innovation using welfare dollars for child welfare purposes (Berns, n.d.; Berns & Drake, 1999). The mechanisms by which these effects could occur have been based on theory and limited research and are likely complex. Public child welfare workers, who are providing services in the welfare reform era, need an understanding of the experiences of welfare-involved families and the pathways between welfare use and child welfare outcomes.

This curriculum is designed to educate social workers about the experiences and needs of families involved with both public welfare and child welfare services. The goal is to train workers to provide high-quality case management services within a post-welfare reform environment. It is developed based on data from a longitudinal, ethnographic

study of 10 families (four from the Precarious Families survey and six from the public child welfare agency) living in an urban environment. The curriculum is divided into several chapters, including the following topics: (a) a review of what is known about child welfare outcomes in the welfare reform era; (b) a description of welfare reform as implemented in one county (Alameda County, California), including examples, from the client's perspective, of managing within a welfare-to-work environment; (c) a dollars-and-cents description of life on welfare, vis-a-vis the cost of living for families, illustrating some of the complexities of raising children in conditions of urban poverty; (d) a set of case examples illustrating pathways from welfare to child welfare, with special attention to aspects of welfare reform which may play a role in child welfare outcomes; and (e) a discussion of how to apply qualitative research methods toward improving child welfare practice, as well as an explanation of the research methods used for the study. The curriculum includes teaching aids, suggestions for discussion, and experiential exercises to increase students' understanding of welfare and child welfare.

INTRODUCTION

In 1996 the federal welfare program that had existed since 1935, known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), was dismantled and replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). With the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, or P.L. 104-193) and TANF, AFDC's income maintenance program was substituted with a model intended to move parents into the workforce. By 2001, cash assistance is no longer an entitlement to low-income parents raising children: Cash grants are now time-limited, and parents in need of

financial help must meet a number of behavioral requirements. In the early to mid-1990s, prior to the passage of PRWORA, many states obtained waivers from the federal government that allowed them to implement reforms to their welfare programs. With these state waivers and changes to the federal laws, the welfare system in the United States has undergone a dramatic alteration.

There are many anticipated effects of these policy changes. Among the possibilities are changes in labor force participation rates of single parents, shifts in family income levels, and reconfigurations in family structure through marriage and cohabitation. Parental mental health and daily functioning are thought to be influenced by changed expectations and the chances of parents succeeding in the workforce. There are likely to be effects on child well-being as well, along with measures such as child health, school attendance, and experiences in child care. One particular area of concern has been the likelihood of child maltreatment rates rising or falling in response to these various policy changes. With changes in family income and the anticipated consequences for parental stress levels, it has been expected that parenting quality could be affected. Increased (or decreased) levels of maltreatment will influence the child welfare system's organizational capacity to respond to families' needs and may affect the use of the foster care system as an intervention. Additionally, systemic changes in public child welfare resulting from the implementation of TANF are likely to have an impact on the operation of child welfare and to influence the outcomes of families who are involved with both public agencies.

The pathways through which these events may occur are likely to be complex and are important for child welfare workers to consider as they respond to families' needs. The

job of a child welfare worker is arguably different—and more complicated—in 2001 than it was prior to welfare reform. This curriculum explains and illustrates the essential features of welfare reform and with the use of detailed case examples, offers ways for case managers to understand and think critically about the relationship between welfare and child welfare. It does not focus on broad aspects of child well-being, nor does it address in any depth the systemic factors influencing child welfare outcomes. The emphasis is on the relationship between participation in welfare programs and involvement with child welfare services for reasons of child maltreatment. It is guided by the overarching question: "What are some of the pathways between welfare and child welfare under welfare reform?"
MODULE I

WELFARE REFORM IN CALIFORNIA

MODULE I
WELFARE REFORM IN CALIFORNIA

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Purpose

- To provide an introduction to welfare reform as it is being implemented in California.

Content

- A description of CalWORKs and Alameda County's program, specifically, provide the backdrop for the remainder of the curriculum.
- Table 1, *Sample Calculation of Monthly Income*, gives examples of welfare and employment income calculations and compares the total monthly income of sample families at different wage rates.
- Table 2, *CalWORKs Payment Standards*, provides a realistic look at the level of benefits that families of different sizes might receive under the current system.

Use

- This section of the curriculum is meant to be used as background material for the instructor.
- This section may be required reading for students to insure that all students have some familiarity with welfare reform in California.

Teaching Aids

- Possible questions for discussion are included at the beginning of this chapter.
- Additional activities for outside the classroom are provided at the end of the chapter.

CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES

This chapter can be used to foster the following curriculum competencies:

2.5 Student has knowledge of the special characteristics and situations of the low-income family and the single-parent family.
3.13 Student has knowledge of and understands how to work collaboratively with other disciplines that are routinely involved in child welfare cases.

3.24 Student understands the strengths and concerns of diverse community groups and is able to work with community members to enhance services for families and children.

5.1 Student effectively negotiates with supervisor and professional colleagues, systems, and community resources to further accomplish professional, client, and agency goals.

5.3 Student can understand client and system problems from the perspective of all participants in a multidisciplinary team and can assist the team to maximize the positive contribution of each member.

5.6 Student can effectively use advocacy skills in the organization to enhance service delivery.

5.8 Student demonstrates a working knowledge of the relationship process of accessing community resources available to families and children; utilizes them appropriately, and updates as necessary.

6.2 Student demonstrates knowledge of specific laws, policies, court decisions, and regulations essential to child welfare services.

6.7 Student can identify how the legislative process impacts agency policies, procedures, and programs.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- This chapter outlines CalWORKs and Alameda County's specific program for welfare reform. What are the main aspects of welfare reform? What are the state guidelines and how does Alameda County interpret these? What program aspects of welfare reform are required by federal law? What program flexibility is offered at the state and local levels?

- Table 1 shows sample calculations for monthly income for a family of three. Do these numbers surprise you? Do you think this is an adequate amount of money to live on? Does this income formula provide an incentive to work?

- Welfare reform includes a number of policies that regulate behavior, such as work requirements and sanctions. What do you think of this approach to welfare provision? In what ways is this different from welfare in the past? What do you believe are the underlying rationales for these requirements? Who do you think might benefit, and who might be harmed by these requirements?
WHAT IS WELFARE REFORM? A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CALIFORNIA’S CALWORKS

Welfare, as we know it today, is a system that provides cash assistance to qualifying low-income families on a time-limited basis, with the intent of transitioning parents into the labor force. Parents must meet a number of behavioral requirements such as participating in work-related activities, immunizing their children, and cooperating with child support enforcement. The failure to meet these requirements results in a loss of financial benefits through sanctions and penalties. Since the passage of PRWORA, federal funding is now structured in the form of block grants to states, and TANF dollars may be spent on a range of child welfare services. One implication of this block granting arrangement is that while certain aspects of welfare are federally mandated, individual states may also choose to implement more restrictive features such as specific penalties for parental noncompliance, or in some cases they can implement more expansive, supplemental programs.

California is among a handful of states that have the most lenient time limits and sanctions in place (Pavetti & Bloom, 2000). For example, California families with work-related sanctions have only the adult portion of their grant reduced, whereas Federal law allows states to eliminate the entire family's cash grant amount. Thus, the child only grant protects families from losing their entire income source. In addition, California’s welfare system is county administered, and thus not only does the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program differ from the welfare programs in other states, but CalWORKs’ provisions vary to some extent between

California counties. California counties "differ tremendously with respect to status of local economies and labor markets, caseload size and characteristics, expenditures on welfare-related services and approaches to decision-making and implementation" (California Budget Project, 2001a, p. 4). Still, a number of key CalWORKs features are statewide. They are listed below.¹

- Families on aid at the time of the county's implementation of CalWORKs are limited to 24 consecutive months of cash assistance; new applicants are eligible for 18 months with a possible 6-month extension. There are two exceptions to this: (a) there is no job available, or (b) the individual is engaged in unsubsidized employment or community service. After a 1-month interruption in financial assistance, a participant may again be eligible. Both single-parent and two-parent CalWORKs families are subject to the national 5-year lifetime limit on aid for adults. As noted above, in California families can continue to receive a child-only grant for eligible children, in the form of cash or vouchers. Certain individuals (e.g., kin caregivers, disabled adults) are exempt from the lifetime limit.

- Single parents or caregivers must participate in work activities such as a job search, job training, community service, or paid employment for at least 32 hours per week to receive the full assistance amount, unless they are exempt. Adults in two-parent households must be involved in 35 hours per week of welfare-to-work activities. Noncompliance results in sanction of the adult portion of the family's cash grant.

- Welfare-to-work activities generally include an orientation and a 4-week job search, after which participants who have not obtained employment may receive an individualized assessment of work history and skills. This is accompanied by a welfare-to-work plan that specifies work activities and supportive services.

- These activities may include employment in the public or private sector, selected educational opportunities that are directly related to employment, and/or mental health, domestic violence, or substance abuse treatment if necessary.

- By federal law, 20% of the state's caseload can be exempt from work activity requirements. Under CalWORKs, exempt individuals can include those who are disabled, older caregivers, caregivers of disabled family members, kinship caregivers of foster children, or parents of infants under 6 months old. Teen mothers under 18 who enroll in a teen parent program (such as CalLearn), some

¹ This provides only a rough outline of CalWORKs' features. For additional detail, please see the following sources consulted for this section: California Department of Social Services [CDSS] (n.d.) and Frame et al. (1998)
pregnant women, and those deemed to have good cause for nonparticipation are also included. Participants experiencing mental health problems, domestic violence, or substance abuse issues can be excused from work activities for a specified time period (e.g., 6 months), if good cause is determined. These participants can receive special services to support their eventual transition from welfare to work.

- A formula is applied by which family cash grants are allocated in relation to the number of children and adults receiving assistance and the amount of employment earnings. Families are allowed to keep a proportion of their employment income (called the earnings disregard) in addition to an adjusted TANF grant.

Table 1: Sample Calculation of Monthly Income for a Family of Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum grant (family of three)</th>
<th>Earned income at minimum wage</th>
<th>Disregard first $225</th>
<th>Disregard 50% of remaining income</th>
<th>Actual grant (maximum grant minus disregard)</th>
<th>Total monthly income (grant plus earned income)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$645</td>
<td>$6.25 for 32* hrs/wk = $880</td>
<td>$880.00</td>
<td>$655.00</td>
<td>$645.00</td>
<td>$317.50 + $880.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Incomes for a Family of Three Under CalWORKs Earned Income Disregard Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hourly wage</th>
<th>Hours worked per week</th>
<th>Monthly income earned(^{ii})</th>
<th>Adjusted grant level</th>
<th>TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$6.25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$880.00</td>
<td>$317.50</td>
<td>$1,197.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6.25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$1,100.00</td>
<td>$207.50</td>
<td>$1,307.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$985.60</td>
<td>$264.70</td>
<td>$1,250.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$1,232.00</td>
<td>$141.50</td>
<td>$1,373.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8.50</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$1,196.80</td>
<td>$159.10</td>
<td>$1,355.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8.50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$1,496.00</td>
<td>$9.50</td>
<td>$1,505.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{i}\) This chart provides estimates for example purposes and is not based on exact or official calculations.

\(^{ii}\) Maximum grant is based on California Region 1. Source: www.dss.ca.gov/wtw/pdf/00map.pdf

\(^{iii}\) Based on an annual average of 22 days or the equivalent of 4.4 weeks worked per month. For additional details regarding CalWORKs policies, see Frame et al. (1998).
• California's welfare laws include a *family cap*: No additional benefits are provided for children born while parents are receiving TANF.

• Counties may choose to utilize lump-sum *diversion payments* in an effort to prevent families from entering CalWORKs.

• Preschool children must be up to date on their immunizations, and school age children must enroll in and attend school regularly for the parent or caregiver to avoid financial penalties. Unless good cause can be established, applicants and recipients must also cooperate with paternity establishment for the purposes of child support enforcement. The penalty for this form of noncooperation is a 25% reduction in the family grant amount. Adults whose grants have been penalized (unlike those sanctioned for noncompliance with welfare-to-work requirements) must still participate in work activities.

• Adults with a felony drug conviction after 1/1/98 or who are convicted of certain types of welfare fraud are permanently denied their portion of the cash assistance amount. (Some fraud convictions result in time-limited denials for cash assistance.)

• Child care is subsidized for families participating in welfare-to-work activities, and certain other expenses (e.g., transportation to work, and uniforms or dress clothes for employment) are covered.

• Eligibility for TANF, MediCaid, Food Stamps, and SSI have been restricted for legal immigrants (for additional detail, see Greenberg et al., 2000; Zimmerman & Tumlin, 1999).

**CALWORKS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

The CalWORKs program in Alameda County includes: (a) Eligibility/Intake; (b) Orientation; (c) Appraisal (initial assessment of participants' needs and skills); (d) Benefits (Medi-Cal, food stamps, cash-assistance); (e) Support services (e.g., transportation, child care); (f) Diversion, CalLearn, job workshops, or approved welfare-to-work activity (can include treatment for substance abuse, mental illness, or domestic violence); (g) Case management; (h) Individual welfare-to-work plan and; (i) Assessment (a more thorough assessment of participants' skills following job workshops) for participants who have not yet found jobs (Lum, 1997, p. 3). A number of important aspects of Alameda County's program are described in detail below.
• **Payment standards:** The table below lists payment amounts by family size (or individuals who are included as a part of the *assistance unit*). These amounts constitute the basic maximum aid payment; payment amounts change depending upon employment income.

**Table 2: CalWORKs Payment Standards**
(Alameda County, effective 10/1/00)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family unit size</th>
<th>Maximum aid payment (non-exempt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>1,363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/wtw/pdf/00map.pdf](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/wtw/pdf/00map.pdf)

• **Assessment:** When a client first comes into the social service agency for assistance, there is an initial assessment of the client's needs and skills. This includes such information as urgent needs (e.g., housing, food, mental health services), language ability (e.g., ESL), and the client's abilities (A. Ford, personal communication, September 12, 2001). Unlike many counties, Alameda County provides a more thorough initial screening for participants, which is meant to address barriers to employment (e.g., language) before the participant enters Job Club (Klerman et al., 2001). Participants with special needs are referred to private and nonprofit community-based organizations for further assessment and assistance (A. Ford, personal communication, September 12, 2001). After this initial assessment, the participant is assigned a case manager who follows the
participant throughout the welfare-to-work process (A. Ford, personal communication, September 12, 2001).

- **Benefits to enable participation in welfare-to-work:** Participants receive benefits, such as transportation and child care, so that they are able to meet the program's participation requirements. Transportation benefits include bus and rapid transit passes for participants to use when attending program-related, educational, and employment-related activities (Lum, 1997, p. 24). These passes are also available for transporting children of participants to and from child care and school (A. Ford, personal communication, September 12, 2001).

- **Welfare-to-work activities:** Participants without exemptions or waivers must participate in welfare-to-work activities at least 32 hours per week. In Alameda County, there are several activities that may count toward welfare-to-work hours. These include: employment (either unsubsidized private employment, subsidized private employment, subsidized public employment, self-employment, or transitional employment), community service, on-the-job training, vocational training and education, job skills training, work study, adult basic education, and community service (Lum, 1997). In addition, Alameda County also offers substance abuse services, domestic violence services, mental health services, and post-employment services as approved welfare-to-work activities (Lum).

- **Initial phase of welfare-to-work:** During the initial phase participants are required to attend Job Club (which may begin immediately after the initial assessment) and job workshops. During the first week of Job Club, participants learn about job preparation, including interviewing skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, and identifying specific job skills the participant possesses (e.g., homemaker skills). They are also videotaped during a mock interview with a program leader. Following this, they critique their interviewing skills. At the end of the week, they repeat the interview process, but this time they have interviews with employers from the community. Afterward, they discuss the improvements they have made with regard to their interviewing skills (A. Lilie, personal communication, September 13, 2001). This day is also considered graduation day, and the participants have a party to celebrate. Following their graduation from Job Club, participants have 4 weeks to search for jobs. At the beginning of each day they meet at a Network Center, where they apply what they learned in class. This usually includes a motivational activity and setting goals for that day. They then spend the day searching for a job. After each day of job hunting, participants report back and discuss their day. This includes problems or successes they may have, interviews, and questions. In addition, they discuss what is necessary to find and maintain a job. Whenever a participant finds a job placement, the class has a celebration (A. Lilie). If a participant is unable to find a job after the 4-week search, then the participant is referred to an outside agency for an in-depth assessment of skills and needs (Klerman et al., 2001).
**Child Care:** Child care continues to be a problematic issue for both participants and case workers. At its inception there was a considerable dearth of available child care slots for children in the infant to 3-year-old category in Alameda County (Lum, 1997). To illustrate, in 1997 there were “1,189 subsidized child care slots in Alameda County for children ages 0-3 years,” but there were “10,171 children on aid in Alameda County who are ages 0-3, producing a deficit of 8,952 slots for that age range” (Lum, p. 24). The majority of requests for child care services are for children in the 0-2 year-old category, and infant child care is “45% more expensive than child care for children ages 2-5 years” (Lum, pp. 23-24). The maximum hourly rate the state will pay is ”$3.44 for infants, $3.23 for preschool-aged children, and $2.97 for children ages 6-14” in cases of nonlicensed providers (S. McPherson, personal communication, October 22, 2001). Licensed providers are reimbursed at the rate they charge, provided it does not exceed the state's maximum rate (S. McPherson). If the rate does exceed the state's maximum (only about 10-20% of providers’ rates exceed state maximums), the parent must make up the difference between the hourly rate requested by the child care provider, and the amount the agency is willing to pay (S. McPherson, personal communication, August 7, 2001). In these cases, the parent can also opt to choose a different provider. Family members and TANF recipients are able to provide child care services and receive payment for caring for children other than their own, but they must report their payments as income (S. McPherson, October 22, 2001).

**Time Limits:** Throughout California, counties have differing interpretations of the CalWORKs legislation and thus, have differing interpretations of which point in time the 18- to 24-month time limit begins. In Alameda County, a participant signs either a welfare-to-work plan or a self-initiated plan at assessment and the 18- to 24-month state clock starts (A. Ford, personal communication, October 23, 2001).

**Exemptions:** Although there is usually a good cause for employment exemption for mothers of children under 12 months of age for the first child and 6 months of age for subsequent births (Klerman et al., 2001), exemption is determined on a case-by-case basis (Lum, 1997). The criteria used in determining exemption include: "special needs of the parent, special needs of the child, the availability of child care, the best interests of the child, or the desire of the parent to remain at home or obtain employment" (Lum, p. 23). When a participant enters a social service agency, she/he may disclose certain problems or needs to the case worker. Case workers are not permitted to ask whether or not participants have substance abuse problems (A. Lilie, personal communication, September 13, 2001). Instead, they must rely on self-disclosure by the participant. If a participant discloses a substance abuse problem, then the participant would be granted a temporary (i.e., 3-month) deferral and referred to a contracted agency for assessment and treatment. If participant treatment needs exceed 1 year, the participant may be granted an exemption from work requirements. This time would not be counted on the state's 18- to 24-month time clock, but would count against
the federal 5-year lifetime limit. Depending on individual case needs, it is also possible to work substance abuse treatment into the participation plan (A. Lilie). Similarly, mental health services may also be included in the welfare-to-work plan (Lum). If participants' mental health needs impair his or her ability to seek and maintain employment, then an exemption may be granted. The county will continue to provide mental health services, even after the 18- to 24-month time limit expires, provided the participant is still eligible to receive Medi-Cal benefits (Lum). However, if the mental health services were included in the welfare-to-work plan, they will count against the federal 5-year time limit (A. Ford, personal communication, October 23, 2001). CalWORKs participants who have been victims of domestic violence within the 12 months prior to seeking assistance may also receive temporary waivers that allow them to receive counseling and treatment, instead of participating in work-related requirements. Waivers are reviewed every 3 months, and the decision to offer the waiver is based on: "the best interest and safety of the family; the desire of the parent to obtain counseling or employment or a combination of the two" (Lum, p. 28). If the participant is unable to work after 12 months, the participant is referred to mental health services for further treatment and evaluation (Lum). It is important to note that, in this county, funds are used for existing clients in treatment (for substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental health), not to expand program sizes to accommodate increasing needs (Klerman et al.).

- **Sanctions:** If a non-exempt participant drops out of the Job Club or fails to comply with program requirements, then the participant is considered noncompliant and is subject to sanctions (A. Ford, personal communication, September 12, 2001; A. Lilie, personal communication, September 13, 2001). The consequence of a sanction is a reduction in the grant amount and the sanctioned amount varies with the size of the family. For a family of three with a grant amount of $645, for example, the grant amount would be reduced to $520 (A. Ford). In Alameda County, only 35% of participants who are asked to attend Job Club actually complete it (Klerman et al., 2001, p. 173). The most common reasons cited for noncompliance, or no-shows to Job Club and Orientation include "problems with child care, problems with transportation, late notice of requirements, illness, work conflict or confusion, and emergencies" (Klerman, et al.).
ACTIVITY: IMAGINING WELFARE-TO-WORK

The following vignette is intended to facilitate discussion about the experience of participating in welfare-to-work activities from a client's standpoint.

Imagine you are a 30-year-old mother of one daughter and also care daily for three children of relatives. Prior to the birth of your daughter, you had a son who died of SIDS at 6 months old. Because you received TANF for your son, you are now subject to the family cap and only receive funds for yourself. Although you could be considered the primary caregiver for your relatives’ children, the relatives claim their TANF checks for themselves and only periodically give you any cash to help out. For weeks you've been calling your worker and trying to find out about enrolling in CalWORKs because various family crises are straining your budget beyond what you can handle any more. In exasperation, you have decided that you should get a job and place your daughter in child care. The worker has not returned your calls, or if he has done so, you haven't gotten any messages. You did not understand the paperwork that was sent to you about participation in CalWORKs.

Except for the month-long job as a custodian that you held prior to having children, you have not been employed in several years. You were once involved with vocational rehabilitation services (sheltered workshops) for which you qualified, you understand, because of your learning disabilities. It is Tuesday and you've just reached your CalWORKs worker on the phone. He has told you that you need to attend the orientation next Monday, for 6 hours. You are excited and hopeful about this development, but it presents you with certain challenges.

How will you put together child care for your 12-month-old daughter and the other three children in your care? You do not have a car and are not familiar with the exact location of the orientation given to you by your worker. It seems like it will be on a different bus line than the ones you usually take. How will you find out how to get there? You don't think that you have anything appropriately professional to wear to the appointment. How will you handle this? You are worried about not understanding the information they will present at the orientation. How will you explain your learning disability to the workers? What will happen after the orientation that will help to increase your income?
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Using public transportation, take a field trip in pairs to the welfare office to pick up CalWORKs forms and attempt to speak to a worker to ask a question about filling out the form. What was this experience like? What obstacles did you face, if any? How did you address them?

- Welfare reform has been interpreted somewhat differently in each state. This chapter has provided background on California’s program. What are some of the differences in welfare programs of other states? Take one state and research how they have adopted welfare reform. How does it compare to California’s approach?
MODULE II

WELFARE REFORM'S IMPACT ON CHILD WELFARE

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Purpose

- To explore the effects that welfare changes might have on child welfare and what is known thus far about these effects.

Content

- The initial section of this chapter outlines a framework for thinking about how welfare reform may affect child welfare outcomes.
- Figure 1, Simplified Model of Welfare Reform's Potential Impact on Child Welfare, synthesizes the potential impacts of welfare reform on child welfare and provides a graphic representation of these effects.
- This section of the curriculum also provides a comprehensive review of the current literature of the effects of welfare reform on child welfare.

Use

- This section of the curriculum is meant to familiarize instructors and their students with the relationship between welfare and child welfare.
- This section may be required reading for students and used to formulate class discussions.

Teaching Aids:

- Possible questions for discussion are included at the beginning of this chapter.
- The group activity, Welfare Reform's Effect on Child Welfare, prepares the instructor for an in-class activity that expands students' thinking on the impact of welfare reform on child welfare.
- Additional activities for outside the classroom are provided at the end of the chapter.

CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES

This chapter can be used to foster the following curriculum competencies:

2.1 Student understands that child abuse and neglect are presenting symptoms of social and family dysfunction.
2.2 Student is able to assess the interaction of individual, family, and environmental factors which contribute to abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse, and identifies strengths which will preserve the family and protect the child.

2.5 Student has knowledge of the special characteristics and situations of the low-income family and the single-parent family.

2.11 The student understands the mission and goals of public departments of social services and the network of community child welfare services.

3.10 Student has knowledge of how clients are nonvoluntarily referred to public child welfare.

3.13 Student has knowledge of and understands how to work collaboratively with other disciplines that are routinely involved in child welfare cases.

3.24 Student understands the strengths and concerns of diverse community groups and is able to work with community members to enhance services for families and children.

4.7 Student understands the interaction between environmental factors especially in terms of racism, poverty, violence, and human development.

5.1 Student effectively negotiates with supervisor and professional colleagues, systems, and community resources to further accomplish professional, client, and agency goals.

5.3 Student can understand client and system problems from the perspective of all participants in a multidisciplinary team and can assist the team to maximize the positive contribution of each member.

5.6 Student can effectively use advocacy skills in the organization to enhance service delivery.

5.8 Student demonstrates a working knowledge of the relationship process of accessing community resources available to families and children; utilizes them appropriately, and updates as necessary.

6.2 Student demonstrates knowledge of specific laws, policies, court decisions, and regulations essential to child welfare services.

6.6 Student can demonstrate knowledge of public child welfare funding streams for public child welfare agencies and their implications for agency policy objectives and service delivery priorities.

6.7 Student can identify how the legislative process impacts agency policies, procedures, and programs.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

• In attempting to explain the absence of a strong welfare reform impact, thus far, on child welfare, Geen, Fender, Leos-Urbel, and Markowitz (2001) have suggested that our assumptions about the links between welfare and child welfare involvement may also be flawed. While poverty is highly correlated with child welfare involvement, income alone is not a very good predictor of abuse and neglect nor grounds for a finding of abuse or neglect (p. 42).

What do you think? Do you agree that there may be less cause for concern about child welfare outcomes of welfare reform than was originally believed? Why, or why not? Identify your own assumptions and the empirical evidence to support them, if any.

• Recall that in one study, over one quarter of AFDC families experienced a maltreatment report (Needell, Cuccaro-Alamin, Brookhart, & Lee, 1999). Does this proportion seem high or low to you? What strengths, capacities, or other characteristics do you think are required of parents living in poverty in order to avoid contact with the child welfare system?

• Speculate about the role of employment in child welfare risk. How, do you imagine, might low-wage work influence parenting capacities and thereby lead to child welfare involvement? How might low-wage work make reunification more, or less, difficult for families already involved with the child welfare system?

• How might sanctions to a welfare case be an indicator of family problems? If they are, then what do you think should be the welfare system's response? The child welfare system's response? If neither available response seems adequate to you, how might an alternative be designed to address the needs you have identified? What are the implications for the family of each possibility?

HOW MIGHT WELFARE PROGRAMS AFFECT CHILD WELFARE?

As with the federal welfare reforms, the specific features of CalWORKs, outlined in the previous section, are intended to effect change in parental behavior. Some changes may occur as intended, and other outcomes may be different from those intended by policymakers. The impact of welfare reform on family functioning, in various ways, is expected to have a consequent effect on what will be called here, child welfare outcomes.

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Welfare reform has also been expected to have systemic effects, or an impact on the institutions involved in welfare and child welfare. These systemic or mechanical effects (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2001) may also have an impact on child welfare outcomes.

The flow chart below (Figure 1, *Simplified Model of Welfare Reform's Potential Impact on Child Welfare*) outlines some of the possibilities. The model is considered simplified because it does not incorporate all of the effects of welfare reform, such as changes in communities and neighborhoods that may occur as a result of transitions from welfare to work, or the effects of changed income levels on children's health and development, which can affect parent-child relationships and child welfare outcomes. Changes that occur as a result of welfare reform's specific features may be positive or negative. Included in the box marked *Welfare System/TANF* are aspects of TANF including benefit levels, which are influenced by sanctions, penalties, time limits, and the family cap; the effect on income levels of earnings disregards and the Earned Income Tax Credit; welfare-to-work activities in which parents are expected to participate; the possibility of exemptions and services for those with special barriers to employment; child care and other work supports; and other behavioral expectations. Finally, although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that altered eligibility for immigrants is an important feature of TANF that has wide-ranging implications.

These features of welfare will affect the income level and daily activities of families, thereby having effects on parental mental health and psychological well-being (see Figure 1, *Effects on Parent box*). By influencing parental psychological factors, it is expected that aspects of parenting and family life will change. Additionally, these

changes may also affect other aspects of the lives of low-income families such as the nature and functioning of their social support networks. The experience of participating in the new welfare system and moving from welfare to work are likely, it is thought, to affect such aspects of family functioning as the quality of relationships between parents and children, the use of alternate forms of child care, and the structure of families and households (see Figure 1, *Family Functioning and Structure box*). These shifts may then have an impact on child welfare outcomes for families involved with the welfare system. The *child welfare outcomes* listed here include maltreatment reporting, substantiation, service involvement, and placement in out-of-home care (kin and non-kin foster care). They will also include the length (and intensity) of services provided, the ways that families exit the system (e.g., via reunification, guardianship, or adoption), and reentries to the system (service use or foster placement) for those who have exited. Each of these is listed as a separate child welfare outcome because each constitutes a different measure of child welfare involvement, impact on the family involved, and on the system as an operational entity.

Finally, features of TANF such as welfare-to-work requirements are also likely to have systemic effects because the institutions and service systems of welfare have shifted their mandates, sources and uses of funding, philosophies, and approaches (see Figure 1, *Systemic Effects box*), thereby influencing the resource base of the child welfare service delivery system. We focus here on the pathway to child welfare outcomes that involves family functioning and structure.

WELFARE REFORM AND CHILD WELFARE: WHAT DO WE KNOW THUS FAR?

Five years following the passage of PRWORA, it is not yet possible to "quantify the impact of TANF on the need for child welfare services" (Greenberg et al., 2000, p. 22). The research that speaks to this question is indeed limited, and TANF's effects will probably be clearer over time. However, some information is available that tells us about welfare reform's effects on the actual or potential child welfare population. The following section briefly discusses what is known, to date, about some of the overall economic and employment outcomes for families affected by welfare reform. This is done in order to place the experiences of the most precarious, or hard-to-serve, families in context of the larger population of welfare recipients. It provides some information about long-term welfare stayers as well as those who have left for employment, and those who have left due to sanctions or time limits. Employability and parenting ability are not equivalent capacities, and there is not a consensus about the relationship between the two. However, the characteristics of those who are struggling the most, economically, may offer some clues to understanding the challenges faced by some parents on welfare. The section then turns to a summary of what is known about the welfare-child welfare relationship prior to TANF, and reviews the evidence of TANF's effects since welfare reform's implementation.

Welfare Reform's Effects on Families

Welfare reform has not had the widespread negative impact on families that was anticipated by many. Rather, the available research suggests positive changes in a number of areas since the federal reforms of 1996, including decreases in welfare

caseload size and child poverty rates, a flattening out in nonmarital birth rates, and increased rates of employment among single mothers (Haskins, Sawhill, & Weaver, 2001a, 2001b). The decline in caseloads that has occurred throughout the rest of the country has also occurred in California. Between March 1995 and June 2000, the number of individuals receiving assistance through AFDC or CalWORKs decreased by 43% (California Budget Project, 2001a). During the same period, the Food Stamp caseload declined by 42% (California Budget Project). However, the relative contributions of a healthy economy and the new welfare programs are difficult to tease out. Not all families are experiencing better standards of living (Haskins et al., 2001a, 2001b).

Early Positive Impacts of Welfare Reform

- Decrease in welfare caseloads
- Decrease in child poverty
- Flattening out in nonmarital birth rates
- Increased employment among single mothers

With welfare reform not all families are economically better off. Many families continue to live in poverty and the proportion in deep poverty has increased.

Aggregate statistics on the outcomes of welfare reform, such as lowered welfare caseloads and increased labor force participation, do not capture the variation in outcomes nor the experience of subgroups (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2001). These subgroups include the hard-to-employ stayers on welfare and those who have exited welfare (the leavers), either voluntarily, through work or marriage, or involuntarily, because of a sanction or reaching a time limit. Many of those who move into the labor force do so by obtaining low-wage jobs with no benefits, and many eligible families are
not receiving the food stamp or MediCaid benefits that might assist them (Greenberg et al., 2000; California Budget Project, 2001a; 2001b).

Since welfare reforms began, the proportion of families in deep poverty (below 50% of the poverty line) has increased (Primus, cited in Haskins et al., 2001a). These floundering families are more visible now than under the previous welfare system, since they are supposed to transition from welfare to work (Haskins et al., 2001b). Danziger (2001) states that:

> despite four years of a booming economy and strong pressures from state agencies, many current and former recipients cannot keep and find jobs. Some will be sanctioned or reach their time limits even if they are willing to work, either because employers will not hire them or because personal attributes will prevent them from working steadily (pp. 5-6).

For those still receiving assistance, there may be many barriers to employment. Estimates at the time of the federal welfare reform legislation suggested that 24-50% of the AFDC caseload would need special interventions to help them move toward employment (e.g., Olson & Pavetti, 1996, cited in Zedlewski & Loprest, 2000), although some of the welfare population might be employable in spite of facing challenges. In a study of women receiving welfare in February, 1997, Danziger et al. (2000) found that survey respondents cited lack of adequate transportation as the most common barrier to employment. However, the authors found that perceived discrimination, few work skills, and substance abuse were the greatest hindrance to employment for these women. Other barriers cited by the authors were inadequate education, little work experience,
domestic abuse, health and mental health issues, and inadequate child care. In a study of Alameda County, California's CalWORKs program early in the implementation process (Speiglman, Fujiwara, Norris, & Green, 1999), it appeared that the number of participants reporting significant limitations could exceed the state's allowable 20% exemption limit. A later analysis of interviews with CalWORKs recipients examined relationships between potential barriers to working and the likelihood of working soon after the CalWORKs program began in Alameda County (Driscoll, Speiglman, & Norris, 2000). The study found lack of child care, lack of transportation, limited work skills, and a criminal history to be barriers to employment, as were (to a lesser extent) heavy drinking, and the recent birth of a child. Interestingly, however, the following factors were not apparent barriers to work at the early stage of CalWORKs implementation: mental or physical health problems, use of illegal drugs, family violence, or a history of childhood abuse. Whether this finding will hold for CalWORKs participants who remain on the rolls in later years is unknown.

Other investigators are studying whether families who leave welfare more slowly (and remain as part of the welfare caseload for longer periods) have greater problems than those who left welfare soon after TANF's implementation. Zedlewski and Loprest (2000) found no significant difference in the employment barriers of adults on welfare in 1999 versus 1997, but did find employment barriers to be common. About 60% of welfare

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<th>Barriers to Employment for CalWORKs Recipients (Danziger et al., 2000)</th>
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<td>• Inadequate education</td>
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<td>• Little work experience</td>
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<td>• Inadequate job skills</td>
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<td>• Perceived discrimination</td>
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<td>• Domestic violence</td>
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<td>• Substance abuse</td>
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<td>• Mental and physical health problems</td>
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<td>• Inadequate child care</td>
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<td>• Lack of reliable transportation</td>
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leavers in Zedlewski and Loprest’s study were working; of the nonworking leavers, 17% were considered at risk (with no current or recent employment history). The at-risk group was similar to the continuous stayers (the long-term TANF recipients) in that about half of each group had two or more barriers to employment (poor physical and mental health, low educational level, substance abuse, domestic violence, or child disability). It has been noted that these data may underestimate the actual prevalence of barriers to employment (Danziger, 2001). Loprest (2001) also found relatively little difference between early and recent welfare leavers, except that a larger percentage of recent leavers were considered to be in "poor physical or mental health."

Thus, the obstacles to be overcome in leaving welfare may go hand in hand with other hardships. In Driscoll et al.’s (2000) Alameda County study, serious hardships were reported among both working and nonworking welfare recipients. Among them: almost half of the sample (46%) was unable to pay the rent fully in the previous year, 1 in 7 "experienced moderate to severe hunger" and one fourth "suffered from poor diet quality" (pp. vii-viii). But notably, barriers to working and hardships such as these were correlated with one another; people with more hardships also had more barriers to employment. The authors point out:

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

their net incomes may experience a decline in the number and severity of hardships (Driscoll, et al., p. 39).

Continuing study of the progress of welfare recipients will better illuminate the circumstances that prevent families from successfully leaving welfare for work and for higher incomes. Such findings are of interest here as it is likely that some of those with difficulty successfully leaving welfare, particularly those with mental health, substance abuse, or domestic violence problems, are families who will also be in need of child welfare services.

As implied by the findings in Alameda County (Driscoll et al., 2000), exiting the welfare system does not necessarily lead to a better standard of living. In a three-city study (Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio), 74% of leavers were categorized as living in poverty (Moffitt & Roff, 2000). In general, leavers with less education, who are in poor health, who have young children, and who are younger themselves have worse employment, household income, and poverty rates (Moffitt & Roff). In Loprest’s (2001) study of early and recent groups of welfare leavers, about one third of both groups reported having to cut the size of meals, more than half worried that food would run out before getting more money, and nearly one half of recent leavers (46%) had not been able to pay their housing costs sometime in the last year. The California Budget Project (2001b) reports that over half of CalWORKs leavers say they are no better off financially, and significant proportions struggle with necessities and paying bills. Although over half of the

CalWORKs leavers surveyed in that study were working, their earnings were generally low: above the poverty level (for working leavers), they still only made about half the cost of raising a family in California.

A share of the population experiences barriers to employment, some of these families are being sanctioned, and those who leave due to sanctions are at least somewhat likely to experience financial hardships.

For the purposes of child welfare, of special significance and concern is an understanding of families whose benefits are reduced or eliminated because of sanctions, penalties, or time limits. One study found that sanctioned leavers fare worse than those not previously sanctioned as they are employed less often, are more likely to be poor after leaving welfare, and have lower monthly earnings (Moffitt & Roff, 2000). Pavetti & Bloom (2000) reviewed the limited empirical literature on sanctions and time limits and concluded that "families who lose benefits due to sanctions are harder to employ than welfare recipients as a whole, while many families who reach time limits are employed, but not earning enough to make ends meet" (p. 27). Many of those sanctioned experience "personal and family challenges" such as chemical dependency, physical and mental health problems, domestic violence, and "logistical barriers" such as lack of child care and transportation (Pavetti & Bloom). Noting that findings are mixed about the status of sanctioned families, Pavetti and Bloom state that although increased homelessness has not been reported, "a substantial proportion" (from one third to one half) of sanctioned families are struggling to make ends meet, and between 15-25% reported insecurities about having enough food. In fact, sanctions and penalties may be most often imposed.
on families experiencing the greatest hardships (Cherlin et al., 2001). In addition, "some research suggests that states use sanctions against families that do not understand why they are being sanctioned, and that sanctions are sometimes applied inequitably" (Haskins, et al., 2001, p. 4). In one study (Cherlin et al.), the most frequent reason sanctions and penalties were imposed was for not following the rules. The authors suggest that noncompliance with program rules may be a flag for other problems, a flag which could be turned to positive use if it led to intervention.

In sum, the literature reviewed here suggests that many families are leaving, welfare only to remain in poverty, and some families experience significant barriers to employment that may also compromise other aspects of their functioning (e.g., parenting). While welfare reform has succeeded in certain respects, there is a segment of the population that has not benefited from the changes in welfare. Given that many maltreating families, especially neglecting families involved with the child welfare system, are among the poorest of the poor (Nelson, Saunders & Landsman, 1993; Wolock & Horowitz, 1979), it is reasonable to expect that some of those adversely affected (or who fail to benefit from) the new welfare system will also have a need for child welfare services. The next section examines what is known about these overlapping populations and evidence about the impact of welfare reform on child welfare.

**Welfare and Child Welfare Involvement**

The research on child welfare and welfare includes both pre-welfare reform studies and those that have tracked the impact of TANF. This section first discusses what
is known about the relationship between welfare and child welfare prior to the implementation of TANF or pre-TANF waivers.

Families involved with child welfare services (CWS) constituted a small proportion of the pre-reform, or AFDC population. However, the CWS population before TANF was largely made up of poor families who had relied, at least in part, on welfare for their income support. In a study of 1990-1995 California AFDC entrants Needell et al. (1999) found that about 27% were reported for maltreatment, 21% were investigated, 8% had a case opening, and 3.2% entered foster care. Another study found that about 2.0 to 2.6% of children entering AFDC in Illinois, California, and North Carolina entered foster care between the years 1995-1996 (USDHHS/ASPE, 2000). Shook (1998) has estimated that (prior to TANF) more than 40% of Illinois foster children came from a family that received AFDC in the same month and an additional 20% came from families with recent welfare or food stamp receipt. These figures alone have constituted good cause for concern about the potential impact of welfare reform. As Geen et al. (2001) point out, "even a slight increase in the rate of child welfare involvement of TANF families could lead to a significant increase in the number of children involved with child welfare" (p. 9).

Welfare reform’s effects on state child welfare caseloads are unclear. Subjective assessments suggest there may be changes (that are not evident in data on overall caseload size) in the kind of child welfare cases being served.

Prior to TANF, higher rates of maltreatment were associated with lower state welfare benefit levels as well as higher proportions of children in more severe levels of poverty (Paxson & Waldfogel, 1999a, 1999b). This association is consistent with the

numerous studies that document a relationship between poverty and maltreatment, especially neglect (e.g., Drake & Pandey, 1996; USDHHS, 1996). Within the pre-TANF welfare population, families with particular vulnerabilities to child welfare involvement could be identified. Of children who entered AFDC in California, in 1990, those with greater risk of a child welfare event included those who entered welfare as infants, Caucasians, those from single-parent homes, those born into larger families, and children with low birth weight and/or whose mothers had late or no prenatal care (Needell et al., 1999). Needell et al. also found that families who cycled off and on welfare had a higher likelihood of being reported for maltreatment, having a case opening, and being placed in foster care.

Studies conducted on welfare reform waivers of the 1990s, as well as TANF, have produced findings about child welfare that are somewhat mixed and complicated to interpret. There are several likely reasons for these complexities: (a) the time since TANF’s implementation is still relatively short, and therefore we likely have not yet observed the full impact of key features of the law, such as time limits; (b) during the period of TANF’s implementation, the generally positive state of the economy may have acted as a buffer against some of the effects most likely to be negative; (c) there are limited studies that have included child maltreatment and child welfare services outcomes in their evaluations of TANF’s effects; (d) the studies that have been conducted use a variety of methodologies, including different measures of maltreatment, child welfare

services involvement, and indicators of income and workforce participation, and (e) the studies that use administrative or survey data have limited or no capacity to measure the role of key mediating variables, such as parental stress and mental health, and/or to explicate the nature of those stressors or mental health issues (see Appendix A for a table of study summaries).

These limitations notwithstanding, since welfare reform’s inception a few things have been learned about the relationship between welfare and child welfare. These findings are discussed below in terms of (a) the overall impact of TANF on child welfare services caseloads, (b) the role of benefit levels, family income, and poverty on child welfare outcomes, (c) the role of parental employment, (d) the evidence about sanctions and other specific features of reform, and (e) other possible mediating factors such as family structure, parental stress, and mental health.

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2 Twelve empirical reports specifically pertaining to welfare and child welfare were located for this review. To date, two studies (Geen, Fender, Leos-Urbel, & Markowitz, 2001; Romero, Chavkin, & Wise, 2000) have surveyed child welfare administrators about the impact of welfare reform on their caseloads. Geen et al. also examined state-level caseload data. Two studies (Needell et al., 1999; USDHHS/ASPE, 2000) have used case-level administrative data to establish base rates of overlap between welfare and child welfare populations, prior to welfare reform. Needell et al. identified predictors of various levels of child welfare involvement. Paxson & Waldfogel, 1999a used aggregate, state-level data to examine socioeconomic and household data linked to child welfare data to examine the effects of socioeconomic circumstances on pre-welfare reform cohorts’ maltreatment rates. Following upon their 1999 study mentioned above, Paxson and Waldfogel (1999b, 2001) have used state-level, aggregate data to examine the effects of specific state welfare features on maltreatment rates and foster care caseload sizes. Shook (1998) established baseline rates of child welfare involvement among the AFDC population, and using pre-TANF waiver data in Illinois, identified children and families most at risk of child welfare involvement, including comparisons by sanction status. This report was followed by another (Shook, 1999a) that tested whether income loss associated with welfare grant reductions was associated with child welfare risk; this study also included survey data regarding environmental hardship, stressful life events, and other child welfare risk factors. Fein and Lee (2000) conducted a unique experimental study of one state’s welfare program and its effects on alleged and substantiated maltreatment. Finally, Wells and Guo (in press) used administrative data on a cohort of foster care first entries to assess the relationship between welfare and work income and the speed of reunification prior to welfare reform. Forthcoming reports by Wells and Guo using post-TANF cohorts, and others, will add to the empirical knowledge base.
Early Findings on Impact of Welfare Reform on Child Welfare

- No decrease in child welfare caseloads, comparable to public assistance caseload reduction.
- Poverty rates continue to be associated with maltreatment.
- State benefit levels are related to maltreatment rates.
- Income loss due to benefit reduction, particularly when due to sanctions or lifetime limits shorter than 60 months, may affect the likelihood of maltreatment.
- Welfare benefit reduction accompanied by employment and employment income appears to have a complex impact on child welfare. It is possible that employment income can have positive effects. Conversely, employment activities remove parents from the home and may lead to difficulty in balancing new tasks, therefore increasing child welfare risk.

There are mixed reports about the state of child welfare caseloads overall. Geen et al. (2001) report there is no evidence of an increase in child welfare caseload size since welfare reform, as measured using state-level child welfare caseload data and through a survey of child welfare stakeholders. However, they note that workers in some states reported increases in poverty-related neglect cases, sanctioned cases, and cases involving domestic violence. Workers and others indicated, as well, that welfare reform seemed to be affecting dual system families (those involved with both welfare and child welfare systems) more than new child welfare clients. The respondents to the Urban Institute survey also suggested that it was generally too early to tell the impact of welfare reform on child welfare. The concern that child welfare caseloads will be negatively impacted remains. In Romero, Chavkin, & Wise's (2000) survey of 50 state child welfare administrators, about half reported increases in their caseloads (although, as the authors

note, there is a potential for recall bias, given no comparative AFDC data). Half of the respondents said their caseload profiles had changed, with over half of that group reporting that cases had grown more complicated. Opinions were mixed about whether welfare reform had been positive or detrimental to agency efforts. Most respondents believed that TANF sanctions would be unlikely to result in a CPS report, although of those sanctions that might trigger a report, a full-family sanction elicited the highest likelihood rating. Finally, although there may not be evidence of a child welfare caseload increase, there has also not been a decrease in child welfare caseloads, comparable to the public assistance caseload reduction since TANF began (Courtney, Piliavin, & Power, 2001). Additionally, as Geen et al. (2001) point out,

it is possible that the most vulnerable welfare families are already involved with child welfare agencies. Thus, if they are affected by welfare reform, we might possibly see a change in the number of such families to remain intact, but not in the number coming to the attention of child welfare (p. 42).

In spite of the mixed assessments about state child welfare caseloads, some associations between welfare-related features and child welfare indicators have been found. Since TANF’s implementation, states with higher poverty rates have been found to have increased rates of substantiated maltreatment (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2001). Additionally, higher state welfare benefit levels have been associated with lower rates of neglect and children in out-of-home care (Paxson & Waldfogel). Put another way, "to the extent that welfare reforms mean lower benefits, these results indicate that benefit cuts will increase neglect and placement of children in out-of-home care" (p. 16). The authors

state that their interpretations are subject to the problem of an ecological fallacy, and it should also be noted that the foster care data used by Paxson and Waldfogel, which are counts of children in care at the end of each year, may not accurately reflect other variables' impact on foster care placement rates. This is because any point-in-time count of children in care necessarily overrepresents children in long-term care and does not capture change in entry rates.

In a study that linked welfare and child welfare data, case-by-case, Shook (1999) found grant reductions accompanied by lack of employment income to be associated with the greatest risk of entry into the child welfare system, compared to those who were unemployed, but had intact grants. Focusing on families trying to reunify with their children prior to TANF, Wells and Guo (in press) found that although income level was associated with reunification, the source of income was important. In that study, families that maintained their level of AFDC support (with no loss of benefits) had the fastest rate of reunification. The group with the slowest rate of reunification had lost some of their AFDC income, but had gained income from employment. Although the authors report the sample's length of time in care (e.g., 62% of the sample spent 12 months or less in care), they do not report comparative time frames to exit for these groups. Thus, depending upon the length of time involved, it is worth mentioning that slower reunifications may result in fewer reunifications because of child welfare policies that limit the time within which families can reunify. However, cases that reunify more slowly (and take longer than 3 months, for example) tend to be more stable, with children less likely to reenter foster care (e.g., Berrick, Needell, Barth, & Jonson-Reid, 1998; Wells & Guo, 1999). Thus, if

Wells and Guo’s (in press) findings prove to be consistent following TANF’s implementation, depending upon the actual length of the child placements involved, it may be that moves from welfare to work support lengthier, but more effective, reunification processes. Wells and Guo’s (in press) finding regarding employment income and reunification speaks to the apparently complex role of parental employment in child welfare outcomes. There is some evidence that at the aggregate (state) level, maternal moves from welfare to work (given that fathers are absent) increases maltreatment rates, especially for neglect (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2001). Courtney et al. (2001), however, found that in the case of individual TANF applicants, workforce involvement decreased the risk of CPS involvement. As noted earlier in Shook’s (1999) study, the absence of employment income increased the odds of child welfare involvement in cases where welfare grants were reduced; however, the author states that it is
difficult to discern...whether unstable employment or unstable welfare grants are more problematic for recipients of welfare. The fact that the group of respondents who were unemployed with intact grants faced the lowest odds of child welfare system involvement suggests that a decline in welfare income has a more powerful effect on child welfare risk than one's employment status (p. 803). She also suggests, however, that "environmental hardships and employment-related absences" may be "two potential mediators in the relationship between welfare income reductions and child welfare system involvement" (p. 805). Perhaps the activities of

being employed and the income derived from employment serve different functions in the lives of certain families. In Fein and Lee's (2000) study, it appeared that "benefit reductions are most likely to lead to neglect when they stimulate increased employment" (p. 20). Fein and Lee draw similar conclusions to those of Paxson and Waldfogel (1999), that employment plays a different mediating role between welfare policies and maltreatment, than does income changes. Perhaps this is a beginning explanation for the apparently contrasting findings of Courtney et al. and Shook. It is likely that future studies will need to account, in more complex ways, for the relative roles of income, income source, and the meaning of employment as a daily activity that reflects on parental functioning.

Sanctions and time limits are particular causes of benefit reductions that may in some way reflect on families' difficulties. Although little data are available on time limits, some are available regarding sanctions. At the state level, Paxson and Waldfogel (2001) have found that sanctions were related to child welfare involvement, as with their findings about lower benefits, in general. Additionally, lifetime limits shorter than 60 months and tougher sanctions (e.g., those that last until a family is in compliance) lead to increased maltreatment. In particular, states that have adopted full family sanctions have experienced a 21% increase in the number of substantiated cases, Paxson and Waldfogel report. Shook (1998) reported that sanctioned family grants were associated with higher odds of the following: a maltreatment allegation (for lack of supervision, risk of harm, or environmental neglect), a child welfare case opening, or a child placement compared to a nonsanctioned group. (These sanctions were imposed because of

"reasons related to work mandates, child support enforcement, or school truancy problems" [Shook, 1998, p. 11]). Fein and Lee (2000) reported a slight increase in neglect rates among those in an experimental group affected by welfare reforms (including sanctions) over those in a comparison group (although contamination of the comparison group weakened the conclusions about the program's full impacts). These neglect rates rose, in particular, among the most disadvantaged participants (nonwhites, long-term welfare recipients, those with lower educational levels, and those with a history of maltreatment). In addition, neglect incidents (but not abuse) increased for both voluntary and involuntary leavers of TANF, in Fein and Lee's study, although there were some differences between them. Fein and Lee found that while the incidence of neglect increased for both voluntary and involuntary welfare leavers, the rate of neglect among involuntary exits (preceded by sanctions) were associated with a steeper climb. The peak for this group was 3 to 5 months before case closure, and the authors state that "this peaking corresponds most closely to the months when these families were likely to have received the initial sanctions that ultimately led to closure" (p. 23). For the voluntary leavers, the incidence of neglect peaked in the month of case closure and then declined. This finding is interpreted as "some clients who choose to leave welfare may encounter difficulties in balancing new responsibilities that leave them unable to provide adequate supervision for their children....after exits, rates of neglect declined somewhat, possibly reflecting families’ adjustment to new circumstances" (p. 23). In sum, more needs to be learned about the relationship between restrictive dimensions of welfare reforms and child welfare, such as sanctions. However, the findings to date are consistent with the
findings reported earlier about the serious hardships faced by sanctioned families. It appears that families whose income is reduced because of noncompliance with the rules or other reasons are at some degree of increased risk for child maltreatment and entry into the public child welfare system.

Finally, in Wells and Guo's (in press) study of reunification, it appeared that the relationship between loss of welfare income and the reduced speed of reunification was magnified by the inclusion of a crude measure of mothers' mental problems. Shook (1999) reported that the relationship between income loss and child welfare involvement was partially mediated by environmental hardships (e.g., food, housing, and utility problems), and slightly compounded by other stressful life events (e.g., birth of a child). Courtney et al. (2001) also reported that parental stress, a greater number of children, and reports of economic hardship, as well as a history of CWS involvement, increase risk. The role of such mediating factors warrants more detailed consideration in future studies.

SUMMARY

In spite of reduced caseloads and increased employment among welfare recipients overall, it is clear that not all families are economically better off with welfare reform. Many continue to live in poverty and the proportion in deep poverty has increased. An important share of the population experiences barriers to employment. Some of these families are being sanctioned, and those who have their benefits reduced or who leave welfare due to sanctions are at some risk of experiencing financial hardships. While the effects of welfare reforms on state child welfare caseloads do not appear significant thus far, subjective assessments suggest there may be changes in the
kind of child welfare cases being served that are not evident in data on the overall caseload size. Other evidence indicates that since welfare reform, poverty rates continue to be associated with maltreatment rates and state benefit levels are still related to maltreatment rates. Additionally, there is evidence that transitions out of welfare, particularly transitions due to sanctions, may have a relationship to child welfare risk if those transitions result in decreased or less predictable income levels.

Parental employment may play an important mediating role in child welfare outcomes (including maltreatment risk, success while families are involved with ongoing child welfare services, and placement in out-of-home care), although the findings to date are not conclusive on this point. Leaving welfare for work may involve special difficulties and hazards for certain families (e.g., those who are unable to secure adequate supervision for children), whereas a different subset of families may face special child welfare risks because of leaving welfare without employment. Given that many parents and children continue to experience serious economic hardships in spite of leaving welfare for work, employment may represent an income source, but not an easier life. It may also signify that some parents have certain functional capacities, but that nonetheless, employment presents new challenges and requirements (such as getting children to daycare). Finally, it appears that at least some of the families who find it most difficult to successfully transition from welfare to sustainable employment may also need supports for their parenting to prevent poor child welfare outcomes from occurring.

GROUP ACTIVITY: WELFARE REFORM’S EFFECTS ON CHILD WELFARE

Divide the class into small groups to consider the broader range of welfare reform’s effects and their impact on child welfare. Each group should refer to Figure 1 and the literature review to formulate answers to the following questions. Each group should prepare to present their ideas about one of the questions to the entire class.

- What other things, not included in Figure 1 might affect child welfare outcomes? Outside of these welfare reform changes, what else might contribute to a family’s risk for child welfare involvement or their ability to reunify following foster care placement?

- What are some things that could mediate the effects of the welfare system on child welfare outcomes? What factors might make it easier/harder for some families to deal with the welfare program?

- In addition to child welfare outcomes, what other aspects of family life might be affected by welfare reform?

- Though they are not mentioned in detail in the literature review, what are the systemic effects of welfare reform? How might these impact child welfare outcomes?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Contact a child welfare worker at the county level. Explain to her or him that you are a student and ask for a few minutes of his or her time. Ask her or him about his or her experience since welfare reform. Has she or he learned about what the reform means? Has he or she noticed any change in number or type of cases?

- Conduct a further literature review on the impact of systemic changes on child welfare. What is known about these efforts?
MODULE III

REALITIES OF LIFE ON WELFARE AND LIVING IN POVERTY

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INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Purpose
- To provide students with a realistic view of the experiences of the CalWORKs participant.

Content
- The initial section of this chapter, *The Experiences of Parenting in Conditions of Poverty*, describes the subjective experience of parents raising children in conditions of poverty. Examples are taken from actual interviews with welfare participants and their experiences are described in their own words.
- The *Dollars and Cents of Life on Welfare* provides an illustration of the economic realities of life on welfare. Case vignettes and budgetary information, based on actual income and expense amounts, are provided.

Use
- This chapter can be used as required reading to familiarize students with the realities of parenting while relying on public assistance.
- This section allows the instructor flexibility with possible activities and class discussion.

Teaching Aids
- Questions for discussion are provided at the beginning of the chapter to facilitate discussion on the realities of welfare.
- The group activity, *Living on Welfare*, is provided at the end of the chapter to allow students to use case vignettes and budgetary information to consider dilemmas faced by families on welfare and the effects on parenting that may occur.
- Additional activities to be used outside the classroom are provided at the end of the chapter.

CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES

This chapter can be used to foster the following curriculum competencies:

1.11 Student is able to advocate for equity in availability of resources and services.

2.5 Student has knowledge of the special characteristics and situations of the low-income family and the single-parent family.

3.1 Student demonstrates social work values and principles; this includes self determination, respect for human dignity and worth, and respect for individual differences.

3.2 Student conducts effective ongoing case assessment and planning.

3.5 Student understands the importance of and demonstrates the ability to work with the client in the community, including home, school, etc.

3.10 Student has knowledge of how clients are nonvoluntarily referred to public child welfare.

3.12 Student engages families in problem-solving strategies and assists them with incorporating these strategies.

4.7 Student understands the interaction between environmental factors especially in terms of racism, poverty, violence, and human development.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION***

- All parents do not have the same capacities to cope with the stresses and worries described here. What do you think is needed for parents to manage these strains effectively? What might compromise a parent's ability to cope? What might be the result if a parent finds these strains overwhelming?

- What resources could parents draw on to help them deal with these stressors? As a social worker, what additional resources could you put them in contact with? Stretch yourself to think of the possibilities (e.g. church, schools, family).

- Clearly, parents on welfare make different choices regarding welfare and work. What thoughts go into those decisions? What are the factors that are important in deciding whether a parent will participate in work outside the home?

- What are the additional strains for parents who work outside the home? What are some of the benefits that work may provide? Are there benefits outside of monetary gain?

- How might the strains of work outside the home affect a parent's ability to see a child's needs and appropriately intervene? How might work affect a parent's ability to provide care and adequately protect his or her child?
REALITIES OF LIFE ON WELFARE AND LIVING IN POVERTY

Living in poverty and raising children, whether a parent relies on the welfare system in whole or in part for their income, can place parents under tremendous psychological and physical strain. Many parents who are involved with CalWORKs must not only cope with limited funds, but are confronted with other constraints on their parenting due to living in conditions of poverty. Many, for cost reasons, are housed in depleted, dangerous neighborhoods and worry about protecting their children from harm. Others face limitations to their time, physical energy, and emotional availability, as well as hopes and dreams about their children’s futures. These experiences are described below in the words of CalWORKs participants, for the purposes of bringing alive some of the difficulties parents face. (These data were collected as part of the longitudinal, ethnographic study that is described in Chapter V). To place these comments in context, it may be useful to know that many of the parents interviewed here have been involved with the child welfare system because of neglecting their children. This suggests that individuals whose parenting has been seriously compromised at different times are no less vulnerable to the stresses of poverty than those whose parenting is consistently

* For additional information related to some of these questions, see Crittenden (1993) and Frame (2001).
strong; perhaps even more so. It also suggests that even formerly neglecting parents can express concerns about poverty's effects on their children. These concerns, or ones like them, are likely to be part of the psychological experience that guides a parent's choices with respect to welfare and work and their capacity to cope effectively.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PARENTING IN CONDITIONS OF POVERTY

Living with a restricted income can generate a virtually constant sense of difficulty providing the necessities of life for one's children (e.g., food, clothing, shelter). For one parent, Janet, these strains exact a significant toll, which she links to her lack of partner support:

*Just to go out to make a way for them to have a place to stay and food to eat and, you know...that's stressful. And for me to have my own life, wow, you know, that's really stressful...Cuz...mainly I'm doing it all by myself and that's hard...*

Another parent, Jennifer, says "there's always a way" to manage financial issues that impact on parenting, however she also says:

*I'm worried about...the housing because I don't make a whole lot and I do need a two-bedroom, I'm worried that maybe...it's gonna be hard 'cause...my money's gonna go for rent, food, electricity, an' I—I probably won' have no more after that....It scares me...*

Maria says,

*There's always times when I run out of...milk and diapers. And I hate that...if I don't have the money for it, which I try to keep a little chunk change running around the

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3 All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants.
house in case of situations like that. But my son always has money...I give him allowance and he holds onto it.

Asked about whether there are "times when something got in the way so that you couldn't give your kids what they needed in some way," Francesca openly talks about financial strain:

Oh, man, yeah. Bills. [laughter] You know, like Veronica—she needs shoes...an’ this month there's no way I can get her a pair of shoes. You know, the soles on her shoes are like...there's no tread, you know. An’...you can't clean 'em with a rag...thank God for [school] uniforms because...her clothes are all flooded. She's getting'—big so none of her clothes fit her....Her top—she's getting’—little boobies she needs a—you know, not a bra but a T-shirt like, you know, bra things like that. These little necessities that don't seem like much, but her little boobies are poppin' out an' she's complexin'...Things like that like this one [gesturing toward toddler] with diapers...sometimes I'm like "what am I gonna do?" I need to potty train her because I can't afford the diapers. [But] I don't have...A little potty chair.

For some parents moving from welfare to work (and from poor to working poor), there is an awareness of limited opportunities for their children (e.g., educational and cultural, as well as the option for material things) because of the low level of available income and a lack of ready access to such opportunities. Both Jennifer and Maria, for example, speak wistfully of taking their children horseback riding, with Maria adding, "But I don't know how much it is to rent the horse or nothing..." Kenisha is very aware that money buys access to the culture of ideas, art, and the experience of travel.
[I wish I had)...the money to like, put them in little schools...like maybe take piano
classes an' start really workin' with their min'—you know, 'cause when you start
with a kid real young...an' they take swimmin' lessons or to go scuba divin'...so
they can learn things an' they won't be scared to do things—won't have any
limitations...Money's important but if you don' have it, you still want the bes' for
your kids so it takes time an' it takes a lotta energy an'...determination...to keep
goin' an' to use what little resources you have to make it work with nothin', you
know. An' that's what I kinda hate 'cause I been so wore out...I hafta start doin' stuff
an'...get my kids out there...

Parents may also experience themselves as having limited physical energy and
emotional availability because of the stress that accompanies competing demands (e.g.,
work, multiple appointments, reliance on public transportation). These parents may feel
themselves to be impatient, irritable, or simply exhausted and unable to attend to their
children in ways they would wish. Janet, for example, links her low energy level and
limited emotional availability to her pregnancy and health issues in addition to her
restricted time due to work and school.

The only thing that I haven't been able to give Ronald is enough time as far as
playing with him, you know, and probably read more to him. And what get in the
way is I'm too tired, I am too tired. In the course of a day I'm just burnt out. I had
more energy before I was pregnant...and now I have diabetes.

Like other working parents in the sample, Kenisha worries about the effects of
these work-related competing demands on her emotional availability as a parent:
I don’t feel like I can give them...the time that they need right now. I feel like I’m so bummed out an’ stressed out, you know. An’ that’s one thing you oughtta be able to give them if you don’t have nothin’ else—is your time an’ your attention...

This has a ripple effect: Kenisha talks of how she worries about the effects of sex and violence on television, but that in her exhaustion she allows the children to watch TV shows, saying, “that’s how I can get rid of ’em—’Go watch TV.’ When I should be sayin’, ‘Go read a book,’ which is a more supervision-intensive choice.”

Parents who work are often aware of, and worry about, having limited time to spend with their children. Jennifer wishes for more time with her children, time that is limited because of her job, time that also costs money:

I’ll be able to get into one [an apartment], I’ve just got to find one that I can afford. I can’t just jump in to any one, otherwise we won’t have no—what do you call that? Not leisure time—[chuckles]—but, you know, fun time for the kids. Everything would be for bills and food and that’s it.

As Glen says,

Saturday is Tasha’s day for whatever we’re gonna do, whatever, because I mean, fair is fair. She’s got her daycare, you know, it’s a typical thing...single parent, you know, the child grows up in daycare. I spend 10, 12 hours with my daughter...she’s going to sleep on me now....I’m gonna wake her soon, feed her [because] I got a couple more things I gotta go do....

On another occasion he explains,
I would like to be able to take the day off: “Gee, I think I'm gon' take the day off an' spen' the day with you or whatever,”...instead of daycare raisin' my daughter...because I'm at work. An' they [are] spendin' more time with my daughter than I do. ‘Cause I get home. I'm tired...[It] gets dark an' then I fix somethin' to eat. She's gotta be in bed by 8:30...'Cause if not, she don' wanna get up in the mornin'.

For some parents, living in conditions of poverty presents difficulties protecting one's children from harms in the environment. Put another way: Money buys some measure of protection for one's children, and the absence of this form of protection creates tension. Kenisha talks of wishing she could purchase better quality child care, explicitly for this purpose. She regrets that "I don' have the time an' the money to take off work to give my boy...the bes' place that's suited for him that...where I feel comfortable that he's gonna be really looked after." Instead she feels "I haftajus' grab the firs' thing I can get if it's a vacancy, you know." This contributes to a sense of inadequacy about her ability to protect DeMarco from substandard care (as was provided by her babysitter at the time, leading to DeMarco ingesting Styrofoam). To make up for what is lacking, she is driven to work as hard as possible to get out of poverty, even at significant cost to herself. "I kinda messed up at the beginnin' [when she was using drugs], but this is what the kids need an' even though you might hafta wear yourself out tryin' to do it, you hafta do it."

Money also buys housing in safer neighborhoods, Jennifer suggests, expressing her concern over the necessity of raising her children in an urban setting characterized by poverty and crime. "It's dangerous. They got, you know, people sellin' drugs right at this store, gunshots every night jus' right in front a the house. The person across the street got
shot an', you know—an' this is—I don't want my babies, you know, Geez." But she cannot afford to live in the community of her choice, leaving her few perceived options other than those same dangerous areas: "If I had to, temporarily [live in the dangerous neighborhood], I would. It's jus' I'd jus' be really protective."

The experience of raising children in poverty can also deeply influence parents' sense of their children's futures. This includes, most strikingly, a foreshortened sense of that future in life-or-death terms (e.g., children in poverty, particularly boys of color, are likely to die young), and also in the ability to hope for positive versus negative outcomes (e.g., completion of high school, avoidance of drugs, criminal involvement, or early pregnancy). Additionally, for some parents, the current conditions of poverty in which they live affect their vision of a future relationship with their child (e.g., hoping the child will care for the parent when older). Parents hope that their children will survive; that if they do, they will follow a positive life trajectory (such as graduating from high school instead of becoming pregnant during adolescence and then relying on welfare; or worse, going to jail); and ultimately, as Maria mentioned, it is hoped that the child will "take care a' mama."

In this vein, some parents focus on the absence of a negative outcome for their children, with Maria wanting them to experience something better than what has been provided for them thus far. Said Maria: "I don't want them to struggle like how I struggled, I want them to be able to go the bank and get their own money and drive around in nice cars and have a good job and not depend on people to, you know, do things for them."

During another interview, she says that she talks to her kids, and tells them:

I want you to have a better life than what I'm livin'. I don' want you to be out there sellin' drugs on the comer or, you know, livin' on welfare, havin' the system take care of you or you in an' outta jail an' stuff like that....Become somethin' in your life. I don't care what it is. Jus' become somethin' in your life. Get that education...I want you to be better than me.

In Francesca's words:

I want them...to appreciate things, you know, not take things for granted. Because ...we didn' have things. She didn' have a lotta toys an' stuff. You'd think she's appreciate things but she doesn't...all I want for my kids, you know, just...financially to be able to take care a themselves....An’...just to be good to other people...they know what it's like to have [very little].

In contrast, some parents are able to view their child's future in predominantly positive terms, ones that emphasize overcoming adversity. Says Janet: "I want him to really learn to be independent. To be independent and to be educated and to know what he want to do in life, not just to be...out there not knowing. And at that time he should be well grounded in a career and really stable." Glen says of Tasha that he wants her to know:

how to be assertive, how to go for it and [not to let] people tell her that she can 't because she's Black or she's a girl, you know...I just want her to know that she's able to do [whatever she wants]...I'm gonna make sure she understands that she has that option.

For some parents, however, the possibility of a positive outcome can hardly be imagined, if at all. When she was asked about her wishes for her child 20 years from now,
Anna responded quickly, with a striking matter-of-factness:

Anna: Um, to be a football player, put his momma in a mansion with lotsa millions!
(holding him in the air) That he gonna be graduated from high school, you know,
make his decision what he wanna do in life, what he wanna be in life...Um—that he, that he's alive.

Interviewer: That he's alive?

Anna: Yeah, that he live to see 20 years from now. Most kids don't.

THE DOLLARS AND CENTS OF LIFE ON WELFARE

As is evident in the statements made by parents above, the strains of a limited income are a significant, although not the only, dimension of raising children in poverty. This section is designed to provide a reality-based, dollars-and-cents description of life on welfare, relative to the cost of living for families in Alameda County, California. (The methods used to develop the following materials are described in Chapter V). Instructors are encouraged to utilize these vignettes and budgeting activities as interactive possibilities that promote exploration of the decisions low-income parents must face. These decisions have implications for the ways in which parents on welfare manage their children's basic care and protection needs.

GROUP ACTIVITY: LIVING ON WELFARE*

Divide the class into three groups and give each group one profile, the matching income/expense list, and a copy of the grocery list. The profile describes the general circumstances of a mother and two children in terms of work, welfare, child care, and living situation. It is meant to acquaint the reader with this person and give the reader

a snapshot of this person’s life. The income/expense list provides a budget that matches each profile. The expense column totals up all monthly costs for that family, and the income column totals all cash and voucher forms of aid and income. The reader will need to apply each benefit to the appropriate expense row (e.g. food stamps to groceries; housing to rent).

Each group should carefully examine the profile they are given along with the accompanying budget and grocery list. The instructor will then assign each group three dilemmas to work through. Each group will need to make decisions based on the data they have been given to help them resolve each of the three dilemmas. Instruct students to imagine themselves in the position of the parent. Depending on the circumstances of the dilemma, they may want to move, make certain sacrifices with regard to groceries, increase work hours, etc., but they must accept the consequences of these choices. Given this budget and obstacles the family faces, each group must in some way resolve the three dilemmas they have been given.

After the groups have had time to work through these dilemmas, the class should reconvene to discuss the activity. Questions for discussion have been included at the end of the activity.

* This activity was inspired by Life on the Line: A Week in the Life of a Single Mom Living in Poverty, available at http://www.horizonmag.com/oncampus/life-on-the-line.asp

**LIVING ON WELFARE: DILEMMAS**

- You return from work one day and your oldest child has a bruise on his/her arm. The child says that the child care provider grabbed him/her. You are faced with a decision to continue to leave your child with this provider, find another provider that may be more costly, or give up your work/recovery program to stay with the child.

- You have met the love of your life. He is loving, caring, and makes you laugh. The only problem is that he has no form of income and nowhere to live. Supporting him will cause a greater strain on your already tight budget, but maybe he is worth it.

- You have just found out that you are pregnant and have decided to keep the baby. You will not be receiving any additional benefits. How will you adjust your income/expenses to pay for this new child?

- Recently, you have noticed drug dealers hanging outside of your apartment. You are considering whether it makes sense to move to a safer neighborhood. What additional expenses would this entail? How would you cover these expenses?

- Holiday time is approaching and you would like to have a holiday meal and provide presents for your children. What other expenses can you cut or what additional income can you bring in to make this possible?
• You have received information from your social worker about completing your GED/going to community college. The idea sounds great, but what changes would this entail? What other sacrifices would you have to make?

• Your 6-year-old child really wants to see the latest Disney movie. With all of the commercials on television, he/she has become obsessed with it, constantly singing the songs and asking when you will take him/her to see it. You have not gone out with the kids in a while, but the movies are expensive. With tickets, bus fare, popcorn and sodas, the evening may cost as much as $30.

• You came home from an exhausting day to find out that your apartment has been flooded. Water from the leaky shower upstairs is all over your living room. The sofa, television and rug are ruined. The television will not go on, and after a few days the rug and sofa have not dried and are beginning to smell. You convince a neighbor to help you get rid of these items, but you don't know what to do now.

• You have not been feeling well lately and have spent about $20 on over-the-counter medications. This is putting a strain on your already tight budget. You could go to the free health clinic, but that would involve an extra day of child care and missing work/appointments. What can you reduce in your budget to afford these over-the-counter medications? Can you afford to go to the clinic?

**LIVING ON WELFARE: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

*Bring the class back together as a group to discuss their resolutions of each dilemma. Encourage each group to present an outcome to at least one dilemma. Use the following questions as a guideline for class discussion.*

• What factors did you use to determine the outcome for each dilemma?
• In addition to cutting expenses, what other methods did you use for reworking your budget?
• Whose needs did you find yourself focusing on: the mother or the children?
• What were the main constraints you faced when trying to work out these problems?
• What are some additional dilemmas that these families might have to face?
• How might these dilemmas, and the strategies for their resolution, compromise the care and protection received by the children? What could be done to address this?
LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY

Profile 1: Combining Welfare and Minimum Wage Work

Elisa is a 22-year-old Latin American woman, the single mother of 2 children, ages 6 years and 8 months. She dropped out of high school when she was pregnant with her oldest child. Since being kicked out of her parents' home last year (when they learned she was pregnant again), she has been living alone with her two children. With the help of friends, she has successfully found housing and employment. Elisa is currently earning minimum wage while working at a fast food restaurant from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Her neighbor, who is a licensed child care provider, watches her infant when she is at work, and her oldest child attends school from 7:45 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., after which he stays with the neighbor until she comes home. The restaurant she works at is a 30-minute bus ride from her child’s school, and she has to drop her child off early to arrive at work on time. She is receiving financial assistance through CalWORKs, WIC, Food Stamps, the PG&E CARE program, and HUD vouchers for Section 8 Housing. Elisa desperately wants to complete her GED requirements, find a higher paying job, and move into a safer neighborhood.
Profile 1: Combining Welfare and Minimum Wage Work: Income/Expense List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly income</th>
<th>Explanation (Income source)</th>
<th>Monthly expenses</th>
<th>Explanation (Expense)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages: $880.00</td>
<td>Earns $6.25/hour at 32 hours/week, 4.4 weeks/month; $6.25 x 140.8 hours = total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CalWORKs grant: $317.50</td>
<td>Maximum grant amount for family of three ($645), less earned income with disregard of first $225 and remaining 50% of earned income.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC: $33.88/month for infant</td>
<td>Average monthly benefit per person in California, FY 2000.</td>
<td>Groceries: $501.71</td>
<td>See grocery list for itemized description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps: $74.60</td>
<td>Estimated based on a formula that accounts for net income, family size, child care costs, % shelter costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare: $1,293.60</td>
<td>Since employed and using a licensed provider, child care costs are generally fully covered</td>
<td>Childcare: $1,293.60 for both children</td>
<td>Estimated cost $7.00/hour/ infant x 140.8 hours = 985.60 Estimeted cost $7.00/hour/child x 44 hours = $308.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation: $76.00</td>
<td>As long as employed, covered by CalWORKs voucher</td>
<td>Transportation: $76.00</td>
<td>Bus fare: $49.00/month/ adult $27.00/month/child Infant rides free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUD Voucher: $420.00</td>
<td>Covers 70% of rental cost</td>
<td>Rent: $600.00</td>
<td>Actual cost of 1-bedroom apartment, Oakland CA, week of August 17, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric/Gas: $12.40</td>
<td>California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program covers 20% of monthly bill</td>
<td>Electric/Gas: $62.00</td>
<td>Monthly average for 1-bedroom apartment in January 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing: Unspecified amount</td>
<td>Cost of some work-related clothing needs covered by CalWORKs</td>
<td>Clothing: $25.00</td>
<td>Estimated annual cost for family = $300.00 ($25.00/month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: $5.34</td>
<td>Universal Lifeline Service, Pacific Bell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry: $42.00</td>
<td>6 loads per week x 4 = 24 loads x $1.75/load = total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Income: $3,107.98</td>
<td>Cash Income: $1,197.50 Vouchers: $1,910.48  total</td>
<td>Total Expenses: $2,639.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Profile 1: Combining Welfare and Minimum Wage Work: Income/Expense List
(cont’d)

i Based on an annual average of 22 days (or the equivalent of 4.4 weeks) worked per month.


iv Actual prices obtained from Pak N Save store, located at 610 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA.


vi A. Ford, Program Specialist, Alameda County CalWORKs eligibility (personal communication, September 28, 2001).


viii C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).

ix C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).


xiv Launderland Laundromat located at 5040 International Blvd., Oakland, CA. (prices, September 12, 2001).

LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY

Profile 2: Welfare Only, No Employment Income

Joan is a 26-year-old Caucasian female, who has two children, ages 8 months and 6 years. After Joan graduated from high school, she moved in with her boyfriend, who was a heavy drinker and used methamphetamines. Soon after she moved in, Joan began to experiment with crank and quickly became addicted. The couple had their first child 2 years later. During this time, Joan's boyfriend became increasingly irritable and began to beat her up. Joan eventually left this boyfriend and entered another relationship, again with a man who used crank and alcohol. When Joan found herself pregnant a second time, she thought about quitting her drug use, but continued to use until the 6th month of her pregnancy. At that time, she had a conversation with a neighbor who was in recovery, and decided to seek help. Joan now says that she wants to stay clean for the sake of her children. Since sobering up, Joan realizes how much time and energy children demand, and she is often exhausted. At her counselor's urging, Joan leaves her children with her cousin (not a licensed day care provider) four times per week, so she can concentrate on her recovery program. The substance abuse treatment services in which Joan is participating qualify as welfare-to-work activities under CalWORKs.
## Profile 2: Welfare Only, No Employment Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly income</th>
<th>Explanation (Income source)</th>
<th>Monthly expenses</th>
<th>Explanation (Expense)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages: $0.00</td>
<td>Joan is participating in substance abuse treatment, which qualifies as a welfare-to-work activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF grant: $645.00</td>
<td>Maximum grant for family of three (non-exempt adult)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC: $33.88/month for infant</td>
<td>Average monthly benefit per person in California, FY 2000</td>
<td>Groceries: $501.71</td>
<td>See grocery list for itemized description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps: $187.70</td>
<td>Estimated based on a formula that accounts for net income, family size, child care costs, % shelter costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare: $433.40</td>
<td>Unlicensed provider covered at $3.44 x 88 hours/month for infant + $2.97 x 44 hours/month for child (after school, 2.5 hours, 4 days/week, x 4.4 weeks = total)</td>
<td>Childcare: $433.40</td>
<td>Joan’s cousin accepts the amount paid by CalWORKs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation: $0.00</td>
<td>County pays nothing if Joan is not working.</td>
<td>Transportation: $76.00</td>
<td>Bus fare: $49.00/month/adult Bus fare: $27.00/month/child Infant rides free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUD Voucher: $420.00</td>
<td>Covers 70% of rental cost</td>
<td>Rent: $600.00</td>
<td>Actual cost of 1-bedroom apartment, Oakland, CA, week of August 17, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric/Gas: $12.40</td>
<td>California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program covers 20% of monthly bill</td>
<td>Electric/Gas: $62.00</td>
<td>Monthly average for 1-bedroom apartment in January, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing: $0.00</td>
<td>County pays nothing if Joan is not working.</td>
<td>Clothing: $25.00</td>
<td>Estimated annual cost for family = $300.00 ($25.00/month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: $5.34</td>
<td>Universal Lifeline Service, Pacific Bell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry: $42.00</td>
<td>6 loads per week x 4 = 24 loads x $1.75/load = total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Income:** $1,732.48  
Cash Income: $645.00  
Vouchers: $1,087.38  

**Total Expenses:** $2,639.42
Profile 2: Welfare Only, No Employment Income: Income/Expense List (cont'd)

i A. Ford, Program Specialist, Alameda County CalWORKs eligibility (personal communication, September 28, 2001).


iv Actual prices obtained from Pak N Save store, located at 610 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA.


vi A. Ford, Program Specialist, Alameda County CalWORKs eligibility (personal communication, September 28, 2001).


viii C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).

ix C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).


xi C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).


xiv Launderland Laundromat located at 5040 International Blvd., Oakland, CA. (prices, September 12, 2001).
LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY

Profile 3: Welfare With Family Cap, No Employment Income

Tonya is a 24-year-old African American female, the mother of an 8-month-old daughter and 6-year-old son. She became a welfare recipient following the birth of her son, and because she has been unable to find stable employment, she has continued to receive welfare as her primary income source. Because she had her daughter while receiving welfare, she is subject to the family cap and receives TANF benefits only for herself and her son. Until recently, Tonya was working at a local bakery, earning minimum wage. She was also living with the father of her two children, until their relationship soured due to his involvement with another woman. Tonya left their home with many of her belongings, but has had to invest in some additional household items. She moved into a furnished 1-bedroom apartment, but is concerned that she will not be able to make ends meet on her own. She lost her job because of her move to a new neighborhood and the logistical challenges of getting to the bakery. She has signed up for a CalWORKs orientation thinking she could benefit from help finding a job and because she does not want her grant reduced. In the meantime, she is not employed and is not utilizing child care other than occasionally through the informal help of her family. Tonya feels fortunate that her mother and younger sister live nearby, and though they cannot offer her help financially, they have offered her a great amount of emotional support. Tonya would like to attend classes at a community college so that she can become a licensed vocational nurse like her aunt.
### Profile 3: Welfare With Family Cap, No Employment Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly income</th>
<th>Explanation (Income source)</th>
<th>Monthly expenses</th>
<th>Explanation (Expense)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages: $0.00</td>
<td>Tonya is not currently employed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF grant: $520.00</td>
<td>Maximum grant for family of two (non-exempt adult)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC: $33.88/month for infant</td>
<td>Average monthly benefit per person in California, FY 2000</td>
<td>Groceries: $501.71</td>
<td>See grocery list for itemized description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps: $225.20</td>
<td>Estimated based on a formula that accounts for net income, family size, child care costs, % shelter costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare: $0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare: $0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation: $0.00</td>
<td>County pays nothing if Tonya is not working.</td>
<td>Transportation: $76.00</td>
<td>Bus fare: $49.00/month/adult Bus fare: $27.00/month/child Infant rides free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUD Voucher: $420.00</td>
<td>Covers 70% of rental cost</td>
<td>Rent: $600.00</td>
<td>Actual cost of 1-bedroom apartment, Oakland, CA, week of August 17, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric/Gas: $12.40</td>
<td>California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program covers 20% of monthly bill</td>
<td>Electric/Gas: $62.00</td>
<td>Monthly average for 1-bedroom apartment in January, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing: $0.00</td>
<td>No coverage of work-related clothing needs at this time.</td>
<td>Clothing: $25.00</td>
<td>Estimated annual cost for family = $300.00 ($25.00/month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: $5.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: $5.34</td>
<td>Universal Lifeline Service, Pacific Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry: $42.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Laundry: $42.00</td>
<td>6 loads per week x 4 = 24 loads x $1.75/load = total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen accessories: $64.98</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kitchen accessories: $64.98</td>
<td>$39.99 (cookware set) + $24.99 (dinnerware/glasses set) = $64.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Income:** $1,211.48

Cash Income: + $520.00

Vouchers: + $691.48

**Total Expenses:** $1,480.76

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(cont’d)


Actual prices obtained from Pak N Save store, located at 610 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA.


C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).


C. Taylor, Oakland Housing Authority (personal communication, August 17, 2001).


Launderland Laundromat located at 5040 International Blvd., Oakland, CA (prices, September 12, 2001).

# LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY

## MONTHLY GROCERY LIST by aisle*

*(lowest priced items are used, generic if possible)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>$/Amount</th>
<th>Total $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CANNED FOODS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applesauce</td>
<td>25 oz. x 2</td>
<td>$1.59/25 oz.</td>
<td>$3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby food</td>
<td>30 jars</td>
<td>$1.00/2 jars</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>15.25 oz. x 4</td>
<td>$.77/15.25 oz.</td>
<td>$3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green beans</td>
<td>14.5 oz. x 4</td>
<td>$.77/14.5 oz.</td>
<td>$3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanut butter</td>
<td>2.5 lb.</td>
<td>$3.99/2.5 lb.</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refried beans</td>
<td>16 oz. x 4</td>
<td>$.99/16 oz.</td>
<td>$3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaghetti sauce</td>
<td>25.5 oz. x 2</td>
<td>$2.59/25.5 oz.</td>
<td>$5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato sauce</td>
<td>14 oz. x 2</td>
<td>$.89/14 oz.</td>
<td>$1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNACKS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham crackers</td>
<td>2 lb. x 2</td>
<td>$3.99/2 lb.</td>
<td>$7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saltine crackers</td>
<td>1 lb. x 2</td>
<td>$1.69/1 lb.</td>
<td>$3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>bag x 3</td>
<td>$2.89/bag</td>
<td>$8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRODUCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>6 lb.</td>
<td>$.99/lb.</td>
<td>$5.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>8 lb.</td>
<td>$.69/lb.</td>
<td>$5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>4 lb.</td>
<td>$.79/lb.</td>
<td>$3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>2 lb.</td>
<td>$.58/lb.</td>
<td>$1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>1.25 lb.</td>
<td>$.49/lb.</td>
<td>$6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>20 lb.</td>
<td>$2.99/10 lb.</td>
<td>$5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$.79/lb.</td>
<td>$3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAIRY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>4 sticks</td>
<td>$3.69/4 sticks</td>
<td>$3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>6 lbs.</td>
<td>$6.39/3 lb.</td>
<td>$12.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>5 gallons</td>
<td>$3.89/gallon</td>
<td>$19.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
<td>$1.99/2 dozen</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby formula</td>
<td>40 oz./day</td>
<td>$22.19/223 oz.</td>
<td>$133.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEREALS/GRAINS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby cereal</td>
<td>16 oz.</td>
<td>$2.89/16 oz.</td>
<td>$2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>loaf x 4</td>
<td>$1.00/2 loaves</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerios</td>
<td>16 oz. x 2</td>
<td>$3.75/16 oz.</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red beans</td>
<td>small bag</td>
<td>$.89/sm. bag</td>
<td>$.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinto beans</td>
<td>small bag</td>
<td>$.93/sm. bag</td>
<td>$.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>10 lb.</td>
<td>$3.69/10 lb.</td>
<td>$3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>12 oz. x 5</td>
<td>$1.29/12 oz.</td>
<td>$6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>32 oz.</td>
<td>$1.29/32 oz.</td>
<td>$1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Ramen</td>
<td>24 pkgs.</td>
<td>$.29 each</td>
<td>$6.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Actual prices obtained 9/24/2001 from Pak N Save, 610 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA.

---

### LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>$/Amount</th>
<th>Total $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEAT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot dogs</td>
<td>12pk. x 2</td>
<td>$.99/8 pk.</td>
<td>$2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham</td>
<td>canned ham</td>
<td>$11.39/ham</td>
<td>$11.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground beef</td>
<td>6 lb.</td>
<td>$.99/lb.</td>
<td>$5.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>3 lb. bag x 2</td>
<td>$8.99/3 lb. bag</td>
<td>$17.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuna</td>
<td>4 cans</td>
<td>$.89/can</td>
<td>$3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>16 oz.</td>
<td>$.99/16 oz.</td>
<td>$.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FROZEN FOODS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed vegetables</td>
<td>16 oz. x 6</td>
<td>$2.49/16 oz.</td>
<td>$14.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish sticks</td>
<td>54 ct.</td>
<td>$4.29/18 ct.</td>
<td>$12.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tater-tots</td>
<td>1 lb. x 2</td>
<td>$2.49/2 lb.</td>
<td>$2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETHNIC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masa</td>
<td>5 lb.</td>
<td>$2.99/5 lb.</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn meal</td>
<td>5 lb.</td>
<td>$3.79/5 lb.</td>
<td>$3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mole</td>
<td>15 oz.</td>
<td>$2.55/15 oz.</td>
<td>$2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn tortillas</td>
<td>50 ct.</td>
<td>$1.25/50 ct.</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEVERAGES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>2.7 lb.</td>
<td>$8.89/2.7 lb.</td>
<td>$8.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>48 ct. bags</td>
<td>$2.19/48 ct.</td>
<td>$2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit juice</td>
<td>1 gal. x 6</td>
<td>$4.49/gal.</td>
<td>$26.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>24 cans</td>
<td>$3.88/24 cans</td>
<td>$3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEHOLD ITEMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comet/Ajax</td>
<td>20 oz. x 2</td>
<td>$.99/20 oz.</td>
<td>$1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper towels</td>
<td>3 rolls</td>
<td>$2.99/3 rolls</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL HYGIENE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deodorant</td>
<td>XL</td>
<td>$2.29/1</td>
<td>$2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapers</td>
<td>240 ct.</td>
<td>$18.99/84 ct.</td>
<td>$56.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaper wipes</td>
<td>300 ct.</td>
<td>$3.99/750 ct.</td>
<td>$7.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine napkins</td>
<td>24 ct.</td>
<td>$2.99/24 ct.</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>4 bars</td>
<td>$1.89/4 bars</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL GROCERY BILL:** $484.91  
**- WIC:** $ 33.88  
**- FOOD STAMPS:** $125.00  

**FINAL COST:** $326.03
### LIVING ON WELFARE: GROUP ACTIVITY (cont’d)

Items purchased occasionally that may factor into monthly grocery expenditures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>$/Amount</th>
<th>Total $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPICES/CONDIMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking soda</td>
<td>8 oz.</td>
<td>$.41/8 oz.</td>
<td>$ .41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catsup</td>
<td>14 oz.</td>
<td>$1.89/14 oz.</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jelly</td>
<td>small jar</td>
<td>$1.89/jar</td>
<td>$2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>small jar</td>
<td>$2.39/jar</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>iodized table</td>
<td>$.45/container</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>5 lb.</td>
<td>$1.69/5 lb.</td>
<td>$2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanilla extract</td>
<td>small bottle</td>
<td>$2.39/bottle</td>
<td>$1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinegar</td>
<td>32 oz.</td>
<td>$1.29/32 oz.</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeast</td>
<td>3 pk.</td>
<td>$1.69/3 pk.</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable/Canola oil</td>
<td>bottle XL</td>
<td>$1.89/bottle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEHOLD ITEMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum foil</td>
<td>25 sq. ft.</td>
<td>$1.19/25 sq. ft.</td>
<td>$1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleach</td>
<td>96 oz.</td>
<td>$1.69/96 oz.</td>
<td>$3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dish soap</td>
<td>25 oz.</td>
<td>$3.29/28 oz.</td>
<td>$7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry soap</td>
<td>32 loads</td>
<td>$7.99/42 loads</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich baggies</td>
<td>50 ct.</td>
<td>$1.89/50 ct.</td>
<td>$5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet paper</td>
<td>24 rolls</td>
<td>$2.99/12 rolls</td>
<td>$2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash bags</td>
<td>20 ct.</td>
<td>$2.39/20 ct.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHARMACY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotic ointment</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$5.49/1</td>
<td>$5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band-aids</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$2.29/1</td>
<td>$2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Tylenol</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$4.19/1</td>
<td>$4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desitin</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$4.89/1</td>
<td>$4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimetapp</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$3.39/1</td>
<td>$3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibuprofen</td>
<td>24 ct.</td>
<td>$3.19/1</td>
<td>$3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrocortisone cream</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$3.99/1</td>
<td>$3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrogen peroxide</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$.79/1</td>
<td>$ .79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petroleum jelly</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$1.69/1</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubbing alcohol</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$.79/1</td>
<td>$.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Orajel</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>$5.29/1</td>
<td>$5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL HYGIENE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairspray</td>
<td>15 oz.</td>
<td>$2.50/15 oz.</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razors</td>
<td>8 pk.</td>
<td>$1.99/8 pk.</td>
<td>$1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>15 oz.</td>
<td>$1.49/15 oz.</td>
<td>$1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste</td>
<td>8 oz.</td>
<td>$3.19/8 oz.</td>
<td>$3.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL OCCASIONAL EXPENDITURES: $85.56**

* Actual prices 9/24/2001 from Pak N Save, 610 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA.
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- For 1 week keep track of your expenses, including a share of monthly payments (i.e., rent, utilities). Compare this to the expenditures of one case profile. What do you spend money on that this family cannot afford? How could you change your expenditures if faced with their limited source of income? What things would be hardest to give up?

- All of these families are eligible for Medi-Cal, California’s Medicaid program. The income and expense sheet for each case profile does not include the cost of health insurance copayments or other costs related to medical care. If the baby has a high fever, for example, and it is necessary to go to the emergency room, do you know what it will cost? What would and would not be fully covered under full scope Medi-Cal? If the parent transitions fully from welfare to work, what will the Healthy Families program cover? One place to begin your research would be through the Medi-Cal Policy Institute, located at http://www.medi-cal.org/index.cfm
MODULE IV

CASE STUDIES OF FAMILIES INVOLVED WITH WELFARE AND CHILD WELFARE

MODULE IV
CASE STUDIES OF FAMILIES INVOLVED WITH WELFARE AND CHILD WELFARE

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Purpose

- To illustrate ways in which dual system involvement (with both welfare and child welfare services) may affect families.

Content

- This section of the curriculum contains six detailed case examples drawn from a qualitative study of 10 families involved with the welfare and child welfare programs.

- The introduction, accompanied by Table 3, Some Possible Outcomes of Dual System Involvement Under Welfare Reform, outlines the potential impact of welfare reform on child welfare. It provides a framework for the case studies that follow.

Use

- This chapter is meant to facilitate in-class discussions and activities around the effects of welfare reform on families who are at risk of, or are currently involved with, the child welfare system.

Teaching Aids

- Questions for discussion are provided at the beginning of this chapter.

- The group activity, vignettes at the end of the chapter, facilitates the use of case examples for examining child welfare outcomes. Five case examples are provided along with questions to be used in small group discussion.

- Additional activities to be used outside the classroom are provided at the end of the chapter.

CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES

This chapter can be used to foster the following curriculum competencies:

1.9 Student understands and uses knowledge in the provision of child welfare services to cultural and ethnic populations.

1.11 Student is able to advocate for equity in availability of resources and services.

2.2 Student is able to assess the interaction of individual, family, and environmental factors which contribute to abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse, and identifies strengths which will preserve the family and protect the child.

2.4 Student gathers, evaluates, and presents pertinent information from informants, case records, and other collateral sources to support or refute an abuse or neglect allegation.

2.5 Student has knowledge of the special characteristics and situations of the low-income family and the single-parent family.

2.11 The student understands the mission and goals of public departments of social services and the network of community child welfare services.

3.1 Student demonstrates social work values and principles; this includes self determination, respect for human dignity and worth, and respect for individual differences.

3.2 Student conducts effective ongoing case assessment and planning.

3.3 Student demonstrates the ability to evaluate and incorporate information from others, including family members and professionals, in assessment, treatment planning, and service delivery.

3.5 Student understands the importance of and demonstrates the ability to work with the client in the community, including home, school, etc.

3.10 Student has knowledge of how clients are nonvoluntarily referred to public child welfare.

3.17 Student assesses the family from a person-in-environment (PIE) perspective.

3.18 Student develops and implements the case plan based on the assessment.

4.7 Student understands the interaction between environmental factors especially in terms of racism, poverty, violence, and human development.

6.2 Student demonstrates knowledge of specific laws, policies, court decisions, and regulations essential to child welfare services.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- The literature suggests a link between economic stress and the quality of parent-child relationships. Does this seem true from your experience? What other relationships are impacted due to economic stress?
• Table 3 presents potential outcomes of welfare and child welfare involvement. Some of the outcomes presented are positive, some are negative, and some are mixed. What are some factors that might determine whether a family has a positive, negative, or mixed experience? What supports or strengths might help a family to reach a positive child welfare outcome? What additional barriers may lead a family toward a negative outcome?

• In Table 3 increased surveillance is presented as related to negative child welfare outcomes. How might this occur? Does it seem to you that poor families are more scrutinized than other segments of the population? Explain your reasoning and the empirical support for your position.

• Table 3 suggests that psychological impacts will have an unknown effect on child welfare outcomes. What are some potential psychological effects of welfare reform? For example, what are some potential psychological effects of work requirements?

CASE STUDIES OF FAMILIES INVOLVED WITH WELFARE AND CHILD WELFARE

This section examines the ways that economic stress and disruptive life events interact with the psychological and social experience of parents and the resulting impact on family life and parenting quality. The focus on these factors is based, at least in part, on theory and research about the links between economic stress and parent-child relationships. Generally-speaking, this literature proposes that the psychological processes of parents are important mediators between poverty and parenting behavior (e.g., Conger, McCarty, Yang, Lahey, & Kropp, 1984; McLoyd & Wilson, 1990, 1991). The literature also suggests that the quality of a parent's social support network is important, especially for parents at risk of neglecting their children (e.g., Beeman, 1997; Coohey, 1995). These and other characteristics of parents influence the ways in which they cope with living in poverty and the outcomes that their children experience. Although there are some commonalities among groups of welfare participants, this discussion

emphasizes (a) that each experience of life on welfare is an individual one, and (b) that the effects of welfare participation and changes in the welfare system are simply embedded in the daily life experience of many parents. Coping with or utilizing aspects of welfare are experiences that accompany life in poverty.

The section below outlines a set of possible pathways, from welfare to child welfare outcomes, to provide a framework for thinking about families’ experiences. It then presents a series of case examples designed to illustrate the dynamic processes by which aspects of welfare policy may ultimately influence outcomes for parents and children. The purpose of the case examples is to provide child welfare workers with an understanding of some of the ways that involvement with TANF and CalWORKs may affect families, particularly those who are at risk of new or continuing child welfare intervention. Case examples offer the reader a qualitative exploration of ways that parenting may be compromised for those who live in conditions of poverty and rely on the welfare system for support. The reader can then identify potentially useful services and supports for which child welfare workers can advocate.

POTENTIAL "PATHWAYS" FROM WELFARE TO CHILD WELFARE

Table 3 outlines several possible pathways from welfare receipt to child welfare involvement. We can imagine at least three general groups of families who might experience different kinds of outcomes related to TANF. Possible outcomes 1 through 5 are grouped together because of the presumed negative impact of welfare reform on child welfare. Outcomes 6 through 8 are grouped together because they signify possible positive effects. Possibilities 9 through 13 are grouped together because of their

complicated effects and the difficulty predicting the exact nature of an outcome. It should be noted that none of these pathways is mutually exclusive and some families may experience both positive and negative effects.

First, there is the most precarious segment of the welfare population, the group of families about which we have been most concerned (see Table 3, possible outcomes 1-5). For some, a decreased family income due to the punitive aspects of welfare reform (e.g., the family cap, sanctions, time limits) may lead to increased maltreatment and increased use of the child welfare system. This will include, for some families, entry into foster and kinship care. Additionally, this same set of requirements could create economic conditions that lessen the likelihood of successful reunification (for those already involved with the child welfare system) or increase the chances of reentry to care (for those who have reunified). Work requirements, coupled with limited availability of child care, might lead to some parents being unable to adequately supervise their children; a situation that could lead to child welfare intervention. There is the possibility that increased exposure to professionals or surveillance by various authorities, as a result of increased contact with parts of the welfare system, will lead to greater numbers of families being involved with child protection. Finally there has been some concern that the administrative difficulties of welfare reform, in which welfare and child welfare agencies might fail to coordinate their service planning, might lead to increased stress on families and decreased chances of either economic success or stabilized parenting.
### Table 3: Some Possible Outcomes of Dual System Involvement Under Welfare Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare reform changes</th>
<th>Family effects</th>
<th>Child welfare concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family cap, time limits, sanction</td>
<td>Decreased family income</td>
<td>• Increased maltreatment • Increased use of child welfare services (CWS), including increased entries into foster and kinship care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Family cap time limits, sanctions</td>
<td>Decreased family income</td>
<td>• Lowered likelihood of successful reunification • Increased chances of reentry for those who reunify • Increased CWS involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Work requirements with limited availability of child care</td>
<td>Parents choose inadequate care for their children</td>
<td>• Increased CWS involvement for poor families • Decreased chance of economic success or stabilized parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increased surveillance</td>
<td>Increased exposure to social service personnel</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lack of coordination between welfare and child welfare agencies, conflicting case plan requirements</td>
<td>Additional stress on dually-involved families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Increased employment due to welfare-to-work program</td>
<td>Increased income leading to improved parental well-being</td>
<td>• Decreased maltreatment • Decreased CWS involvement • Prevent families from entering CWS • Promote successful exits from CWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Services made available or accessible through TANF dollars (e.g., domestic violence counseling, child care, family preservation)</td>
<td>Positive impact on family’s special needs</td>
<td>• Avoid some negative repercussions these families might otherwise experience under welfare reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Service utilization through CWS</td>
<td>Economic and social buffer for most precarious families</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Option for exemption from welfare-to-work requirements for kin caregivers, coupled with problems finding quality child care</td>
<td>Increased use of informal kinship care for parents on welfare</td>
<td>• Unknown (positive and/or negative) effects on children and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Other specific stipulations (e.g., teen parent requirements to live at home and participate in CalLEARN; school attendance requirements for parents of adolescents; paternity reporting for child support; immunizations)</td>
<td>Varied, unknown effects on families and parenting</td>
<td>• Varied, unknown effects on CWS requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Increased employment in low-wage jobs</td>
<td>Limited economic advantage; however, more contact outside the home for parents and children</td>
<td>• Range of effects depending upon quality of the parent-child relationship and the quality of available child care • Unknown effects on CWS Involvement • No effects on CWS involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Psychological impact of new set of welfare policies</td>
<td>Unknown effects on parental stress, motivation, and behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Policy and program changes due to welfare reform</td>
<td>No substantive impact on some parents for whom welfare is a short-term solution to an economic and/or social crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group (see Table 3, possible outcomes 6-8) includes those for whom welfare reform will reduce their child welfare risk because aspects of welfare reform produce significant and positive changes in family life. For example, increased employment due to involvement in welfare-to-work programs might increase income for some, as well as parental psychological well-being and their relationships with their children. (This likely requires a certain kind of educational and work history and mental health status.) Alternatively, services might be made available through the flexible use of TANF dollars to prevent some families from entering the child welfare system. Services may act as an economic and/or social buffer for some precarious families and either temporarily prevent the need for foster placement or help the family to exit the child welfare system.

The third group (listed in Table 3 as possible outcomes 9-13) contains those for whom the impact of welfare reform is more complex. For this group of families it is difficult to predict the quality of an outcome related to child welfare. Take, for example, kin caregivers who are exempted from welfare-to-work requirements, coupled with the challenges of finding quality day care for parents who move from welfare to work. This could lead to an increased use of informal kinship care for some parents on welfare (which could have positive or negative effects on children and families; depending on a variety of other factors). For other families, increased employment in low-wage jobs might provide little economic advantage compared to welfare receipt, but contact outside the home for parents and children (in subsidized day care) might have any number of positive and negative effects. This will depend on the preexisting quality of the parent-child

relationship and the quality of available child care. The effects also depend upon the psychological impact of the new policy environment on low-income parents. How will the requirements of welfare reform affect parental stress levels, influence their motivations related to work, and alter (or not) their ways of relating to their children? How will other specific stipulations, such as the requirement for adolescent parents to live at home, for adolescent children to attend school, and for paternity reporting and immunizations affect parenting? These remain to be seen. Finally, in some cases welfare reform may have no substantive impact. For example, in families where welfare is purely a short-term solution to an economic or social crisis and the transition off welfare does not constitute a dramatic change in the family's previous state.

It is the first set of concerns (e.g., decreased income or intensified poverty leading to increased maltreatment) that most readily captures our attention and our concern. This is because of the well-documented link between poverty and maltreatment, particularly neglect. This concern is also due to the possibility that there is a group of families who may not qualify as part of the exempt population, but will be tremendously precarious and likely to experience poor outcomes under welfare reform. This precarious group is the not the only one that we will focus on here, however. Some families may actually benefit from aspects of welfare reform in ways that reduce their child welfare risk; their pathways are important to understand in part because they may shed light on ways to proactively assist those facing significant barriers to success.

The six case examples that follow\(^4\) are based upon data collected in a longitudinal, ethnographic study of 10 families during the postwelfare reform era (between 1999-2001). All of these families lived in urban communities in Alameda County, California, that were characterized by relatively high concentrations of low-income families. All relied on TANF as a primary source of income around the time they entered the study and all had at least one infant or toddler. Additionally, more than half of the sample was involved with the public child welfare services agency because of child neglect. The circumstances of their lives varied, as did their relationships to the welfare and child welfare agencies. (A summary table describing the sample and its key characteristics, is provided in Chapter V). The data are based on in-person interviews with family members that occurred approximately monthly, for about a year, with an effort to follow-up with families at the end of the second year. The frequency of these visits and the exact number of months of participation depended upon the nature of the family's relationship with the interviewer and the study. This is the reason that some case examples presented here have greater depth and detail, than others. All families were interviewed about the same general set of topics, with a focus on their experiences of parenting, the experience of living in conditions of poverty, and their experiences of the welfare and child welfare systems. All interviews were audiotaped, as were the extensive interviewer observations about the parent-child relationship, and any other details (such as descriptions of the neighborhood, the home, the relationship between interviewer and participant). The audiotapes were transcribed, and these verbatim notes were studied to

\(^4\) All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.

provide an understanding of trends in the day-to-day lives of the families. (The methods of sample selection, data collection, and analysis are described in greater detail in Chapter V, Applying Qualitative Research Methods Toward Improving Child Welfare Practice.)

The six cases that follow were selected because their child welfare outcomes cover each of the three groups outlined above (positive, negative, or equivocal). Still, of the 13 possible outcomes of welfare reform that have just been outlined, only 5 are represented by these case examples. This is because families' outcomes were unknown at the outset of the study and because the links between welfare and child welfare were often subtle. Further, this explains the choice of one case, presented here, where the family was not known to be involved with public child welfare services during the interview period. The case was included because of the way that welfare reforms appeared to affect the quality of the relationship between the parent and her children, and the questions it raises about the potential for future child welfare involvement. Seldom were distinct effects of welfare reform observed during this study: within a 12-month period, change proved to occur slowly and the links between a family's economic conditions and the quality of care the children received were not always obvious. To discern the impact of welfare reform over time it seemed necessary to view living in poverty as the context of family life, and living with welfare as simply one dimension of that broader context.

The group activity below makes use of the case examples.
GROUP ACTIVITY: CASE EXAMPLES

Divide the class into small groups and distribute one case example to each of the groups. Suggest that the group review their case example, reflect on the following set of questions, and then provide the class as a whole with their assessment and intervention plan. Students should imagine they are meeting and working with this family as either a child welfare worker or a social worker in another setting.

- What do you see as the relationship between the family's welfare circumstances and their current or potential child welfare involvement? Which of the possible outcomes listed in Table 3 might apply to this family and why? (There may be more than one.)

- Using the blank copies of Figure 2 (provided at chapter’s end), which variables apply in this family's case to explain welfare reform’s potential impact? What variables or influences need to be added to the figure, if any?

- How does child welfare risk present itself in this family, if any? What are the various circumstances that lead, or might lead, to child welfare intervention? At what points in time might these circumstances be identified? Would it be possible to anticipate a need for child welfare intervention and prevent it from occurring?

- What are the vulnerabilities of this family that warrant your attention?

- What unique strengths does this family appear to have that could be mobilized or supported in the children's best interests?

- What parent or family characteristics might be considered barriers to employment? Speculate about the relationship between these barriers and the adult’s parenting capacities.

- Are there any system issues—of coordination, communication, and resource allocation—that can be identified? How might you consider addressing them?

- In what ways might CalWORKs or TANF resources be used, perhaps to bolster the family's economic situation or otherwise proactively reduce child welfare risk?

- How would your answers to the previous questions influence your work with this family?
**Leticia and Dashon**

Leticia is an African American mother in her mid-30s who, when she was first interviewed in April of 1999, lived with her 2½-year-old son Dashon in an apartment on the grounds of her drug treatment program. She had been in recovery for approximately 3 years, after over 15 years of drug abuse, in particular the use of crack cocaine. Leticia had made powerful efforts to change her life in the past few years, displaying her determination to care for her son and her hopes for his future. She spoke of how:

*I was thinkin’...the other day when I was ridin’ on the bus. I was sayin’, ”God, I love my chil’ so much.” An’ then I was sayin, ”An’ I jus’ don’ love him because he’s my chil”’—it goes beyond that...I jus’ want him to have what I didn’ have. I didn’ have all that love, you know what I’m sayin’? But I want him to have it.*

Leticia’s relationship with her son was full of warmth and responsiveness and Dashon appeared to be blossoming. He is a tall, strong, solidly built child who because of his size appeared much older than his 2½ years, and whose cognitive development and language seemed to be on target. He was playful and engaging, funny and energetic with his mother and other adults. He was clearly loved by the women in the nearby recovery program, who would come by to visit. Leticia talked with him often, played with him when she was not too tired, and responded to his needs for physical and emotional care and protection. In several very loving interactions during the interviews, they would playfully tease one another and then hug each other tightly. She could be very thoughtful about the effects of her own emotional state on Dashon, about his internal experience of important events (such as separation from her), and about what she wanted for him as he

grew up. During the interview period it seemed clear that Leticia had a strong capacity to provide for Dashon. Her only difficulties occurred when she had trouble managing the potential hazards in the apartment or the surrounding environment because of resource limitations (e.g., she lived with a threat of eviction for a time and also with the need for repairs to her apartment building, problems that were difficult to fix on a low income).

Leticia worried, to some extent, about providing her son with the necessities (food, clothing, as well as toys) and felt that because she was so exhausted sometimes she wasn't as available to him as she wanted to be. She also worried about Dashon's future. She was raising an African American boy in an urban environment where a significant proportion of those boys would not live to see adulthood, and if they did, they were relatively unlikely to graduate from high school and stay out of jail. Leticia had lived in poverty all her life and experienced first-hand the violence that accompanies drug addiction. Living in an urban environment that is dangerous on a daily basis, Leticia worried about her son's future relationship to drugs. She said, "I just hope my son don't do that [sell drugs, like her brother who had been in prison for nearly 10 years]. An' it's a shame that this stuff [drugs, and drug-related crime] is gon' continue to be here. It's not gon' never go nowhere. It's not gon' never go anywhere."

Aside from these concerns, however, Leticia was at ease with herself as Dashon's parent, and equally at ease with her child. She found tremendous enjoyment in her relationship and could experience his needs and think about how to meet them without any apparent difficulty (this was unlike some other parents in the sample, for whom the experience of being a parent was tremendously anxiety- or

insecurity-producing, and for whom thinking about parenting was very challenging). In spite of her worries about Dashon, she remained hopeful that Dashon would have:

all that he needs and all that he wants. An’ that he have his own business...an’ it jus’ expan’ and expan’ and expan’. An’ even though he got his business an’ he’s makin’ big money, he don’ let it go to his head. He don’t mistreat anybody, an’ he have only one woman.

Early in Leticia's life, her mother was heavily involved in drugs and not able to adequately care for her, and as a result, Leticia spent most of her childhood in foster care and group homes. As a teenager, Leticia herself became involved with drugs, dropped out of school after the eighth grade, and left her last group home for the street. She had her first child when she was 18 years old, and began receiving AFDC. Over the next 5 years, she had two more daughters and continued to receive aid. Then her AFDC benefits were cut off when her three children were taken into the child welfare system for reasons related to her drug use. At the time of the interviews, her parental rights had been terminated on two of the children and she had minimal contact with the third daughter, Mandy, who herself ran away from a group home approximately a year before. Leticia's own mother was murdered in a drug-related incident about 5 years before the first interview.

After losing custody of her three children, Leticia did not receive any federal aid for the next 8 or 9 years. She was heavily involved with drugs during these years and in and out of prison. In 1996 and part of 1997, Leticia received SSI for her drug and alcohol addiction; a form of support that was terminated in 1997 when addiction was deemed no longer a qualifier for receiving SSI. Leticia began to address her addiction in 1996 when
she discovered she was pregnant. Approximately halfway through her pregnancy, Leticia entered outpatient drug treatment, but shortly after the birth of her fourth child, Dashon, she relapsed, was arrested, and again sent to prison.

While Leticia was in prison, Dashon was cared for by Leticia’s partner of 10 years, Pat. After several months of caring for Dashon, Pat applied for guardianship. This action resulted in Dashon being taken into custody when the CPS investigation revealed numerous problems in the family. After her release from prison, Leticia immediately entered drug treatment, and was able to regain custody of Dashon in January 1998, through demonstrating a year of successful recovery. When she first reunified with Dashon, she received an emergency grant from CalWORKS and began collecting a monthly TANF check shortly thereafter. Leticia and Pat's relationship has since ended and during the interview period she had two boyfriends; one who was clean from drugs and the other who relapsed during the year.

Leticia received TANF for the first year of living with Dashon in the treatment program, and then she obtained the first job of her life in early 1999, taking inventory in a warehouse. She did this without the help of CalWORKS, but instead through the recommendation of a friend.

...it feels good to have a job. I never worked in my life. And when I went for the interview the lady was like "uhm why you ain't never worked before? You like being at home, being a housewife or what?" I said, “I think I've had a rough life, that's why...My parents, my mother was an addict so, you know, I didn't have

nobody to tell me nothing. That's why. I had a rough life." And she I guess she liked it 'cause then afterwards she just hired me.

Although she enjoyed having the job, she complained of not being able to work enough hours due to problems finding transportation. After approximately 2 months, Leticia quit the job and attended a CalWORKS orientation in April 1999 because she heard that the agency would pay for child care if she did so. Then in August, she got a job housecleaning at $5.75/hour, which she quit, after 3 months, to take a job with a maid service that paid $7.50/hour. After 4 months cleaning with the maid service, however, Leticia was beginning to analyze the costs associated with the job versus the benefits.

So, you know, I'm beginning every day to realize this job is not worth it, 'cause they only give you...a bus pass. I have to get on [the transit system] again and then I'm traveling, I'm doing all this traveling, I'm not getting paid for traveling time. There's no benefits in this job.

In Spring 2000, she again switched jobs, becoming employed as a housecleaner at a convalescent home for $8.50/hour. While Leticia was at work or at recovery group meetings, Dashon was cared for by a local childcare center, paid for by CalWORKs. Leticia was comfortable with the arrangement, stating that "it's a real nice daycare" and "he (Dashon) is happy with it."

Although at $8.50/hour Leticia's earnings were well above minimum wage, her hours were not reliable (she rarely worked more than 20 hours per week) and her financial situation remained precarious. She did not expect her situation to change.
I'm lower class...I don't see me going' no farther than I am...most middle class and upper class—they have skills and stuff like that—the only thing I know is cleaning.

I'm okay being where I am, I guess.

She also felt that she might have a learning disability of some kind, saying that

Maybe, I should go back to school...I have to think some more about it...I don't know why I ain't got no faith in that I can' pass my GED. But, you know what though? I don' think that I comprehen' very good....you know, understan', comprehen'.

Leticia's hourly wage had risen quite a bit during the study period (from minimum wage to $8.50), but she found the logistics of work very challenging. She left one cleaning job in the fall because she was pregnant. When she terminated the pregnancy she reported, "I feel better now. I can get up an' go. An' see, I got me a job!" Even when she was not pregnant, she was often exhausted, and said that it was difficult to live on a schedule like this, because she had never had a job before. Just the process of getting up every day and getting her child to daycare, and then working and returning home, involved an unusual effort for someone who had previously lived a very different lifestyle. For this reason, she said "I always miss some durin' every week. So I think I would probably bring home more if I jus' worked every—but I can' do it. I be too tired." Additionally, she found it virtually impossible to track the hours she worked and the amount of money she made, in part because the rules of the working world were all new to her.

Leticia's housing subsidy was important to her and her son's economic survival, especially given the unpredictability of their financial circumstances month to month. She
had a thin margin for error with her finances, leading her to rely, it seems, on men friends for some significant income supports. Regarding her rental costs: For much of 1999, Leticia shared her apartment with a roommate. They each paid $400/month in rent to their recovery program, which in turn paid the owner of the property. But in July 1999, Leticia's roommate relapsed on crack and was murdered; an event that was quite traumatic for Leticia, who also worried about the effects of her resulting anxiety on her son. Additionally, Leticia initially thought she would have to move because she would not be able to afford the $700/month rent. When she informed her child welfare worker, however, the agency paid her rent for a month and a half so that she would not lose her lease. The following month Leticia was approved for a Shelter Plus housing subsidy that, according to Leticia, paid up to 100% of her rent. She was on the waiting list for Section 8 and hoped to be approved if and when she became ineligible for the Shelter Plus certificate. Regarding transportation: With the savings on rent for several months, Leticia managed to save $1000; after obtaining the first driver's license of her life she purchased a used car in January 2000.

Leticia had three sources of social support in her life: her recovery program, her boyfriends, and her family. The first was a positive resource; living in such close proximity to the treatment program meant that she had daily contact with other women in recovery (who also had children). It also meant that she had access to group activities and some emotional support, as well as to women who occasionally helped one another out with child care and concrete assistance (e.g., "Can I borrow your frying pan?"). Finally, Leticia had formed a close

relationship with the woman who ran the treatment program, Ms. Jones, who cherished Dashon. Ms. Jones provided regular daycare and even took Dashon overnight, at times, to give Leticia a break.

Boyfriends, for Leticia, appeared to be a complicated source of social and economic support. Leticia received a rather significant amount of help from her men friends. One, in particular, was known to give her up to a couple of hundred dollars at a time. She had little contact with her relatives, because other than those who were dead or incarcerated, "the majority of my whole family is on drugs," she said. Thus, the role of her recovery program was important, but the fact that all her positive support was tied to her continuing recovery was somewhat problematic, as well. Leticia once spoke about a time when she was offered crack cocaine by a woman for whom she cleaned house. Leticia declined, but was afraid to tell anyone from the recovery program about the incident. In a different interview she described to me a situation in which she was tempted to drink.

_I was real lonely an' I was needy, not sex wise but was jus' needy. My roommate had left for the weekend an' all the other women leave, see, 'cause I be here every weekend', I don't go nowhere. I felt so needy and lonely and sad and depressed...then I got the thought in my head that I'm goin' go drink. An' I guess God was with me because I had went to the bus stop and it was the weekend an the bus took a long time on the weekend. So me and Dashon was sittin' at the bus stop an' it wasn't sunny outside an' it was real cold...But my thought was to have a drink...but the bus took so long coming an' it was getting cold and I say, "Dashon, you wanna go home and just order a pizza?"_
So I came back here, ordered us a pizza, ate my pizza, turned on the TV and felt a little better. But it was just God helpin' me out 'cause I probably—I wasn't really hooked on drinkin'. I only dranked when I did drugs. But alcohol talks to you and tell you to do things that you don't wanna do. "Well, you don't have to just drink. Now let's go get some crack or let's go get some coke or let's go get some weed"...It was a rough day. I didn't have nobody to talk to. Couldn't call nobody. I be getting lonely 'cause everybody they be gone with their boyfriends and their families. They go over to their family houses an' I can' go to my family house 'cause they all on drugs an' they all scattered, half of 'em I don't even know where they at. So I don't have nowhere to go on the weekends.

Given the instability of Leticia's income and employment status, combined with the stress of maintaining her recovery while parenting her child, it seemed that Leticia's stability was somewhat precarious. While Leticia was reveling in her new lifestyle, it seemed possible that she might not be able to resist the temptation to use drugs or alcohol to fight her loneliness; and/or that she could turn to the wrong person in her life, a boyfriend or a family member, who could reintroduce her to the lifestyle she was wanting so desperately to avoid. In addition, it was clear that she relied on her support network to help her out financially. While this was a perfectly legitimate and creative source of income, it seemed to leave her somewhat vulnerable.
In the last interview with Leticia on May 24, 2000 she said that she was pregnant, but that she did not want to have another baby. Her boyfriend wanted a child, but Leticia said she instead intended to terminate the pregnancy and get her tubes tied. She said,

Yeah, he wants a baby. Bad. But he a baby hisself. Uh, you know. He—I don’ know. He wants one but—I don' think he’s responsible enough for no baby yet. I mean he—he take care a me good. He gives me lots a money. When he gets his check, I make sure he gives me some money. [laughter] But he doin’ it ’cause he wanna do it. Not ’cause I wan’ him to do it. He do it ’cause he wanna do it. But still—so what. I don' wanna go through that right now.

A year later, on May 24, 2001, efforts to contact Leticia were unsuccessful. Ms. Jones, from the treatment program, said that Leticia had unfortunately relapsed on crack and disappeared. Six months previously she had given birth to a baby daughter, who she had named Tempest, after her mother. When she had disappeared, Tempest had gone to live with her father and Dashon had been placed in (nonrelative) foster care. Ms. Jones explained what she could, to try and make sense of this series of events. Leticia had been working for several months, she said, cleaning for the convalescent home and had apparently been doing very well. However Leticia had "slacked off going to meetings" (recovery/NA meetings) and had gotten back in contact with a relative who was using drugs. Leticia had initially still lived in the apartment near the recovery program, but when Dashon was removed, Ms. Jones said, Leticia had "dived into her addiction" and she had since missed a court date about both children.
Kenisha, Ketanya, Shaunel, Dacey, Olisa, and DeMarco

Kenisha is a 40-year-old, African American mother of four living children: Ketanya (20 years), Dacey (3 years), Olisa (2 years), and DeMarco (6 months). For most of her adult life, Kenisha has cycled on and off welfare. She has held numerous jobs, however most of them lasted 6 months or less. She recently completed an inpatient recovery program after many years of drug addiction and aims to achieve well-paying, long-term employment to be able to support her family.

Kenisha dropped out of high school during her senior year but received her GED a few years later while pregnant with her first child, Ketanya. She took various "odds and ends jobs," frequently relying on welfare when she was not engaged in work. Additionally, she was often supported by sugar daddies, older men who provided financial support in exchange for sex and companionship. When she was in her early twenties, she completed an 8-month course at a local business college and became employed with a government agency as a receptionist. Shortly after, Kenisha's mother died of breast cancer. Kenisha said she then quit her job due to stress; "it was just too much for me." She began using crack cocaine and shortly Ketanya went to live with her paternal grandmother. Kenisha continued to receive support from short-term jobs, sugar daddies, and, given that she no longer had custody of her daughter, General Assistance.

In 1989, Kenisha gave birth to a baby boy, Shaunel, who was born addicted to crack cocaine and was taken immediately into foster care. Sadly, Shaunel lived only a few months, dying of apparent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome while in the care of his foster parents. A few years later, Kenisha had two more children, daughters named Dacey and
Olisa. When Dacey was 1½ years and Olisa was 4 months old, the girls were taken into child protective custody, after Kenisha left them in the care of a woman who was in the process of being evicted. The owners of the house stopped by regarding the eviction, saw the two unrelated and inadequately supervised children, and called the child protection agency. When Kenisha did not return to pick up her children in a timely fashion, she was charged with neglect and the girls were placed in foster care. When the children were first removed, Dacey was placed with an aunt and Olisa was placed with Kenisha's cousin. Dacey did not get along well with the aunt's daughter, however, and appeared very unhappy so Olisa and Dacey were eventually placed together with a non-kin foster family.

In 1997, Kenisha entered an inpatient drug treatment program and in May 1998 she was reunited with her children. Kenisha's recovery is strongly motivated by her guilt surrounding Shaunel's death. She visited him infrequently when he was in the hospital, and she believes this is one reason he was placed in foster care. In addition, if he had been in her care instead of with foster parents, she wonders, could his death have been avoided? Her remorse over Shaunel's death permeates her feelings about being a parent. "I feel like I can't let him [Shaunel] down, and I can't let my kids down. I owe it to them and I owe it to Shaunel too, to make sure they have their life like he should have had his life." This affects her sense of herself as a parent. She describes herself as "forgiving" with her children, a parent who ought to say "no" but cannot because of past mistakes that led to the children's foster placement: "It's like something hangin' over your head. It's like a debt that you hafta pay back or you won't get no closure on it."

Kenisha began collecting TANF at the time she regained custody of her daughters. Her children lived with her at the recovery program until October 1998, when the family moved into an apartment subsidized by the recovery program and considered transitional housing. Kenisha paid $266 per month in rent, which was equal to 30% of her income at the time. She was allowed to remain there with her children for up to 3 years. Kenisha talked of feeling that the child welfare agency helped her out by giving her a "wake-up call." However, she subsequently felt herself to be under constant surveillance, in which her behavior could be critically examined at any time.

*CPS helped me out a lot, because it was dealing with my kids and everything and the thought of losing my kids, that's what really woke me up to say, hey, you can't be playing around. So they helped me out a lot, but still when you're going through that, it's like you don't have no say so over nothing and they can take your kids and put them where they want and you have to like it...then they're coming in, telling you what you have to do...So it's like you feel less than, you're not a person.*

Kenisha's involvement with child welfare services initially damaged her feelings of control over her relationship with her children and weakened her already fragile self-esteem. Although she had made major changes to her life, she felt that the child welfare system continued to base its judgments of her on her past mistakes. She therefore believed that she would never be free of monitoring from the child welfare system. Although her case was dismissed early in our months of interviews, Kenisha felt that the child protection agency would reenter her life if she made the smallest mistake. "They're just watching me from afar, you know, waiting for me to pop." This perception of constant...
surveillance added to pressure to Kenisha to maintain her employment status (discussed below) and to care for her children well. But over the course of the year of interviews, this generated some pride in her accomplishments. "It just makes me feel proud now that whoever watching me can say, 'yeah, well, this chick, she's pretty tough— so far so good. She's still all right.' I'm showing whoever's looking at me that people can change."

In the fall of 1998, Kenisha took a job with a new government agency, with a starting salary of $7.38/hour. She gained this job without any assistance from the CalWORKs program. At this hourly wage, she continued to receive financial assistance that included approximately $186/month TANF, $30 food stamps, and $100 WIC. After roughly 9 months at the job, her salary increased to $12/hour and her TANF grant was cut to zero. Kenisha received an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) of $1500 for 1998, which she used to purchase furniture. CalWORKs continued to pay for her child care costs, and she also continued to receive MediCal for the family.

Kenisha is aware of the changes under welfare reform and is especially sensitive to the effects of time limits and the family cap. As a result, she feels increased pressure to achieve stable employment, pressure that only intensifies her conflict between her need to work and her desire to spend time with her children.

*I want to spend a lotta time with them (her children), but I feel like I have to work and I can't afford to, you know, because if I don't work then we ain't gonna be able to survive, you know, especially with CalWORKs reform, you know. I'm feeling like even though I need to be working and stuff, because I wasted a latta time, that I'm being pushed, you know, like I have to even if I didn't [waste years doing

drugs]...my kids are so little, I really need to be with them... Even though you have
to work it's almost not worth it, you know...because you really don't gain that much,
and then you lose the most important things.

Kenisha feels the stress of her job impacts her relationship with her children. "A lot
of times when I come home I'm tired and stressin' and trying to get them in here and get
them situated and ready to go back to daycare—it takes a lot out of me raising them and
spending time with them—having the patience and, you know, being gentle with them."
Thus, along with limiting the time she has available for her children, work also impacts
Kenisha's parenting when they are together.

Although Kenisha regrets these effects of leaving welfare for work, she also
recognizes rewards of working. "Working I feel independent and, you know, like I'm doing
what I should be doing." However, with only a temporary job she is not sure if the benefits
of working outweigh the costs. Kenisha feels a full-time, permanent position would be
more stable, would offer vacation time, and would provide medical and dental insurance
for herself and her children.

Kenisha gave birth to her youngest child, Demarco, in June 1999 and took 3
months maternity leave from her job. She did not receive any additional assistance upon
the birth of her son due to the family cap. She feels that the family cap is an attempt to
control women's reproductive behavior.

I feel like it's a way of telling people that they don't need no more kids. Or should
not have no more kids if they can't work for 'em. So, I think it's unfair too...I always
wanted to have a big family. But I'm not gonna let welfare and nobody else tell me
when I had enough kids. You know, 'long as I'm doing the right things...it just makes me wanna work.

Before welfare reform, Kenisha feels she would have been able to take a longer maternity leave. "If it was any other time I would be able to stay home with him for a little while, you know, but now I got to hurry up and get back out there."

During the interview period, the children's father seemed to exist in the background of the family, seldom providing direct child care and often gone for days working in his trade. With the addition of the new baby to the household, the dual demands on Kenisha—as parent and worker—increased and she frequently seemed exhausted. These demands were complicated by logistical (e.g., transportation) and institutional challenges (e.g., lack of benefits through her employer). Such competing demands, combined with limited resources, made her tired and less available to her children and contributed to somewhat frayed nerves in the household. When Kenisha was especially tired and emotionally unavailable, the toddlers Dacey and Olisa tended to intensify their most defiant behaviors. This had the effect of getting Kenisha's attention and involvement. Both Dacey and Olisa, Kenisha felt, were traumatized by their separation from her while in foster placement, therefore requiring especially attentive parenting. Indeed, they were usually slightly out of control and not fully responsive to their mother during the interviews. But while chaos often reigned, there was also a high degree of warmth and intensity of affection. The baby appeared to be developing well and was remarkably adaptive, it seemed, to the high-energy environment he shared with his sisters. Although Kenisha’s style was erratic and sometimes ineffective with her toddlers,
she had no major problems responding to the children's basic care and protection needs. In fact, she was remarkably attentive to details of her infant's experience in the midst of a fairly chaotic home environment.

Shortly after she returned to her job in September 1999, Kenisha was hired permanently by the government office and her wages increased to $14/hour. She excitedly claimed that after 6 months, her salary would double to $28/hour, and that the job provided both medical and dental benefits for herself and her children. Kenisha feels that her personal determination contributed to her achievement of this high-paying job. In addition, she attributed her success to supervisors who were sympathetic towards her and respected her efforts to transition off welfare, to employment. In May 2000, however, Kenisha was fired from her job because she released a confidential document to a friend. Kenisha was told this was a violation of the code of ethics, and although she understood the decision, she felt had she needed to provide the friend with a favor.

This unfortunate decision generated new stress. The next month she found a temporary job at $9.00/hour, once again without benefits; and during the month she was without employment, she did not receive a TANF grant. She had recently bought a used car and the value of the car was great enough to disqualify her from welfare. She was very late on her rent payment that month. Losing the income from both her job and welfare for just a few weeks created a precarious situation for Kenisha and her three children. During the last interview, in June 2000, she talked of her worries, laughed nervously, and dismissed the fact that she was drinking a beer.

Efforts to contact Kenisha in May 2001 were unsuccessful.

Glen and Tasha

Glen is a 31-year-old African American father of a 3½-year-old daughter, Tasha. After struggling with years of drug addiction, he has stabilized his lifestyle and obtained sole custody of his daughter, who he is raising with minimal support from family or friends. Glen works as a carpenter and earns over $20/hour, however, his work is very unstable and he is frequently laid off. This situation is very stressful, as it is difficult for him to stay up-to-date on his bills. His continued recovery is a priority for him, and he remains involved with his recovery program by attending occasional 12-step meetings, as well as regularly volunteering time through his church.

Although Glen dropped out of high school during the ninth grade, he later completed his GED and has a fairly strong work history. After leaving high school, he operated a furniture moving business for approximately 6 years and has estimated that he earned approximately $33,000/year during this period. This job ended, he said, only because the truck he used in the business was stolen from him and he could not afford to replace it. After a short time on General Assistance, he took a position as an airport skycab. There, he earned a decent wage, he said, and felt lucky to get the job even though he occasionally had to put up with offensive, racist behavior from passengers. It was during the 4 years of his employment at the airport that he began using crack cocaine. As his addiction intensified, he was late for work a few too many times and consequently lost his job. At that point, he again applied for and received General Assistance, supplementing that small grant with money earned performing odd jobs. This

was his economic situation for approximately 2 years until he entered a recovery program.

Glen met Denisha, who would later become his wife, while both were actively using drugs. Denisha was a heavy cocaine user throughout her pregnancy with Tasha, and when Tasha was born, she tested positive for cocaine exposure. Because of this, and possibly for other, undisclosed reasons as well, Tasha was placed in foster care and remained there for approximately 4 months. When Denisha entered a residential treatment program, she received temporary custody of her daughter. Glen was simultaneously attempting recovery, but still used drugs on occasion because at the time, he said, "I was just in there [the treatment program] for everybody else," implying that he was not attempting sobriety for the most solid of reasons.

Eventually Glen and Denisha graduated from their recovery programs, got married, and moved in with Glen's mother. They both relapsed after a brief period, however, and Tasha was returned to foster care. With Tasha's reentry to foster care, Glen again attempted recovery—this time without the accompaniment of Denisha, who left their home and continued to use drugs. Glen said he could not bear to think of Tasha being raised in foster care and that this was the reason for his determination to reunify as soon as his drug treatment was well underway. After 6 months in one treatment facility, Glen chose to be transferred to a unique inpatient program for single men with children, where he could be reunified with Tasha. Glen and Tasha remained in that program for 10 months, leaving there for an independent life. (Denisha had not attempted reunification with Tasha, failing to show up for most visits, and not participating with any other required

services. Although Glen thought that one day, perhaps, Tasha might know her mother, he was raising her on his own.)

Glen began collecting TANF when he regained custody of Tasha. It provided him with a transitional source of income until he could locate child care and begin to work. After leaving the treatment program, Glen moved with his daughter to a small house in a very low-income neighborhood where he paid $600/month rent. He had no ongoing housing subsidy, but the child welfare services agency provided him with $600 to pay the security deposit when he moved in along with a $350 gift certificate to K-Mart. With this cash, Glen purchased household items and began his life as a single, working father of a toddler. Tasha's child welfare services case with her father, which was originally opened in February 1996, was closed in December 1999 after Glen had met all the case plan requirements. Reflecting on what it was like to no longer be monitored by CPS, he said:

_I guess it's like, you know, sorta like makin' the las' payment on your car or somethin'....It's not really a big deal 'cause you been used to doin' it, you know, but it sure is nice to not have to worry about it anymore, you know. An I it's jus' a nice relief, you know. I don' know. Maybe that wasn' even fair comparin' that with money. You know, car payment. [laughter] But I'm sure that's a big relief not to have to make car payments. I'm sure that's a big relief_

Glen became employed as an apprentice carpenter shortly after leaving the recovery program. Once employed, his TANF grant was cut off, although he temporarily continued to receive approximately $10/month in food stamps. This benefit was cut off in September 1998 as his hourly wage continued to increase commensurate with his work experience.
In order to rise up the carpenter ranks, Glen indicated he is required to attend 1 week of unpaid class, every 3 months for a total of 4 years. If he meets this requirement and passes various tests, his wages will increase every 6 months. Thus, although the salary for apprentice carpenters begins at $10 per hour, by February of 2000, Glen reported that he was earning $21/hour. Along with this hourly wage, Glen receives $2/hour vacation pay, $2/hour towards his pension, and $1.75/hour toward his health insurance premium. The vacation pay that has accrued throughout the year is paid out in one lump sum each February. By June 1999, Glen had accrued over $1,300 in vacation pay.

Thus, as a journeyman carpenter Glen can earn a relatively high wage of $27.89/hour—but the work is both inconsistently available and dangerous. Like other union members, he is frequently laid off of jobs and must put his name on a new union list. It can often take 2 or 3 weeks to get another job, and the seasonal nature of the work affects job availability as well. Thus, there is little work in the winter months when there is more frequent rain. When he is not able to work for many days at a time, Glen receives unemployment compensation at a rate of $230/week, but if Glen is able to work even one day during a week, his gross pay is over the $230 limit and he does not qualify for unemployment compensation for that entire week. He hopes for jobs that last more than a few days in a row and for those that are less dangerous, physically taxing, and out of the weather. The impact of his uncertain income can be serious:

There's no guarantee that they're (his employer) going to constantly have work, no guarantee that I'm going to be with this company. You know, there will be periods of not working when this [series of bills] came up like it did, I just got

caught off guard It's not like big bills, but everything that's here is just like living, you know living in a house where you got your water, your trash, electricity...it seemed like everything just went...Oh, the combination of everything is just like wow [stressful]!

The combination of a large number of small bills, plus a few large expenses—(e.g., car insurance, an $800 unpaid dental bill)—created extreme financial pressure for Glen during several months when he could not obtain consistent, full-time work. During the interview period, an attack of chicken pox kept Tasha out of child care and Glen home from work; this hurt his monthly budget and he worried about losing his place on a particular job. Construction work was not his preferred choice of vocations, but because of his criminal convictions and limited education, he felt that few alternatives were realistically available to him. His commitment to his daughter also figured into his decision, as he wanted to eventually purchase a home in the surrounding area and remodel it himself.

While Glen is at work, Tasha attends daycare that is subsidized by the CalWORKs agency. According to Glen, he takes her to a “family-oriented” childcare center that cares for 12 children between the ages of 8 months and 4 years. Glen and Tasha awaken sometimes as early as 4:30 in the morning, so that Tasha can be dropped off at daycare by 5:30 a.m. and he can get to his job. The daycare program transports Tasha to a nearby preschool between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily, where, Glen says, they offer "more in-depth teaching." The cost of the daycare center is $600/month. If CalWORKs did not pay for child care, the Director of the center told Glen, he would need to pay an out-of-pocket,
reduced rate of $300/month. Indeed, in late November 1999, Glen's income reached the point that he was required by CalWORKs to pay a percentage of day care costs. The total amount was much less than the $300 he would have paid without assistance, but still a significant bite out of his budget: $2.50/day ($50/month). Glen struggled to pay the $50/month in childcare costs required by CalWORKs each month, making clear the profound benefits of CalWORKs' child care subsidy, since it is unlikely he would have been able to afford to pay the entire amount, himself.

Glen seemed to have a strong sense of efficacy as a parent and a belief that he could impact his daughter's well-being. He said, for example, "the neighborhood could be bad as it want to be, [but] you can keep your kids out of the midst of it, you know." Although Glen was often exhausted during interviews, he seemed to enjoy tremendously the opportunity to talk about his daughter. He described her as a "lovable" child with a "keen understanding" who is "hyperactive, hyper-drive" [laughing]. She is "like about four kids in one...one of them's a boy...and one of them is a ballerina, one of them is just really intelligent"; one is the "do-it-yourselfer," he said. His tone was positive and reflective of the ways he and Tasha enjoy one another. He offered a realistic assessment of what is needed to maintain his well being as a parent, and what is good for his relationship with Tasha. On one occasion he spoke of the experience of leaving her at daycare:

"I was ready to go out the door and she ran after me, "Daddy, daddy, no, I wanna be wit 'chu, want go home wit 'chu". I said, "I'm not goin' home, Tasha." I was tryin' to figure out a way to git past that, cuz I...I want her to love her daddy, but I don't want..."
her to be like, oh, boy, I can't separate...I need a break some time, everybody need a break sometime.

Glen proved to be a caring and protective father, and likewise Tasha was an active member of their relationship, letting her father know when she was hurt or needed help. Particularly striking was Glen's tendency to be proactive, often anticipating his daughter's caregiving-related needs and helping her to communicate them. He expressed himself and behaved in ways that spoke to his devotion as a father, one who is attentive and concerned with his daughter's health and development. "She's really special to me...this is my only child. I see a lot of her mother in her, you know...I see a lotta me in there too."

He showed a capacity to be both affectionate and authoritative with Tasha, and in turn, Tasha appeared to be developing very well in her father's care. During one interview, Tasha sat on the floor in front of her father while he combed and rebraided her hair. Glen discussed Tasha's difficulty with expressive language and his plan to enroll her in speech therapy. He also produced copies of his CPS case plan, assessments of Tasha completed shortly after their reunification, and referrals to therapy. The referrals suggested that Tasha had demonstrated indiscriminate attachment behaviors toward strangers, and that Glen and Tasha could benefit from supportive family therapy.

She still is super friendly with people, you know...it's not as bad as it used to be, you know, she don't just go runnin' up to people anymore. So it's improved a little bit I make it a policy every day I make sure that I tell her that I love her I had to make sure she understood that you don' jus' go up kissin' everybody or...know, hug people.
Glen and Tasha were playful in my presence: at the end of one interview Glen proudly talked about how Tasha could dance, and then turned on the music. Rather than dancing alone, she wanted to dance with her daddy and grabbed his hands, jumping up and down. Glen joined in and turned Tasha around in laughing circles.

After participating in fairly consistent interviews between May 1999 and May 2000, Glen did not respond to efforts to contact him in May 2001. As his telephone number had been disconnected and a letter mailed to him was not returned, nothing is currently known about Glen and Tasha's status.
Anna, Kiera, Keshon, and Darnell

Anna is a 33-year-old single African American mother of three children, Kiera (13), Keshon (11), and Darnell (2). Throughout most of her adult life, Anna has combined welfare with work. She has held many different jobs, most of them part-time positions paying minimum wage.

Anna’s first job was with a fast food restaurant. She began working there part-time while still in high school and then continued for 3 years after graduating. At age 21, she gave birth to her first child, Kiera, and quit her job to care for the baby. At that time she began receiving welfare. Two years later, she gave birth to Keshon. Shortly after his birth, she went back to work as an usher in a movie theater and kept this job for 3 years. Although employed more than half time, her income was not high enough to disqualify her from welfare. At age 26, Anna took a job in construction, which she kept for 4 years. It was shortly after beginning her construction job that Anna became involved in drugs—primarily crack cocaine. She said her drug use did not interfere with her work performance because "I worked first and then after I got paid, that's when I went to go use my drugs…I never used [drugs] and [then] went to work. Never."

Shortly after welfare reform’s implementation process began, Anna received information from the welfare department about the CalWORKs orientation and attended. She felt the orientation, which provided information on creating resumes and proper business dress, was helpful. She also credited CalWORKs with helping her to find her next job, as a cafeteria worker at a large business office. But after only a few months, Anna was laid off, and shortly following her layoff Anna spent a long night out, using drugs.
with acquaintances. Before going out Anna had left her 6-month-old son with her mother, and when she did not return the following day, Anna's mother—who had been left in charge of Anna’s children many times before—called the child protection agency. Darnell was placed in non-kin foster care and Anna was informed that in order to regain custody of her son, she would need to enter a drug treatment program. Additionally, she was ordered to attend parenting classes, anger management classes, and the 12-step program offered through her recovery program. Darnell was in foster care for 2 weeks and then moved to live with his mother in the residential drug treatment program. It was during her time in the residential program that Anna, who was exempt from CalWORKs' work requirements, decided to return to school. She began taking business and general education courses at the local community college.

In spite of the apparent abrupt nature of child protective intervention in her life, Anna feels she has benefited from the agency's involvement. "I would still be out here today on drugs...they gave me another chance in life. So I'm thankful and I thank my mother for calling on me." She claims to feel no resentment towards her mother and is appreciative of the close relationship they share.

When Anna entered recovery, her two oldest children went to live with Anna's mother, who received a TANF grant of $505/month to help her care for the children. Darnell lived with Anna in the treatment program, but because of the family cap she did not receive any TANF cash benefits for him (Darnell was born after she had already been receiving TANF for her other children). Instead, at the time of the interviews Anna received $310 in county General Assistance funds and $137/month in food stamps. She

paid $280/month to the residential treatment program to cover her primary expenses (which included room and board), thus only having $30/month cash available for other costs. In April 2000, Anna felt she was ready to leave the residential treatment environment and moved instead to her parents' home, where she could also be with her two oldest children.

Living with her parents improved Anna's financial situation somewhat since she no longer had to pay rent to the recovery program and was able to keep her entire GA check of $310. More importantly, during this time, other than General Assistance, Anna received financial support from a number of sources including her mother, her fiancee, her educational institution, and CalWORKs. Anna's mother provided her with financial support of approximately $150 each month and her fiancee gave her approximately $80/month. CalWORKs financed day care for Darnell and also paid for Anna's books, school supplies, and transportation (a bus pass). Anna believed that CalWORKs would continue to pay for Darnell's daycare "as long as I'm doing 32 hours/week," and stated that she received an educational grant of approximately $2,000/semester in addition to a tuition waiver. She anticipated finishing her business courses within a year and then securing a job as an administrative assistant.

In the same month that she left the residential treatment program, Anna attended a job fair at her school and was immediately hired by a shipping company that was paying wages of $9.20/hour. She began working from 11:00 p.m.-3:00 a.m. loading and unloading trucks, while continuing to attend school from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. "I said oh, I could do that....I could do that and still go to school....I need a job 'cause I can't
depend on no AFDC." Her fiancée delivered her to work each night, picking her up at the end of her shift so she could rest at home for a few hours, before taking the city bus to school. During those hours Darnell was cared for either by Anna's mother, or by a local child care provider (during the daytime).

Anna feels her involvement in school and work supports her recovery.

Doing nothing, I get bored. And when I get bored, then you know, I think about using [drugs] again...these past few days I've been bored but I haven't been thinking about using because I have picked up my school books, you know, studying.

Thus, it may be that her commitment to her schoolwork as well as her job with the shipping company keep her occupied and also help to prevent a relapse. In addition, these activities have fostered improvements in her relationships with her family and her children. She feels her family is very supportive of her recovery. "I have all my family, they're on my side now. They see a big change in me, and I feel changed also." Noting that during the height of her addiction her oldest son used to refuse to call her "Mom" because of her negligent behavior, she feels that her current efforts have promoted a change in their feelings toward her.

I get more respect out of my children now...they call me when they need help with their homework. They call me when they have a problem. You know, they makin' me a part of their life as much as I'm making them a part of mine.

Anna could be attentive with her youngest child, Darnell, but also showed a tendency to place emotional and physical distance between them. On a couple of occasions she was
observed being quite directive and her tone could be sharp. Several times during one interview she told the 15-month-old to go in the other room and get his bottle, demanded that he stop climbing on a nearby high chair, and then threatened to hit him with a shoe when he tested the limit. In another interview, however, she spontaneously intervened in play with his cousins to protect him from falling as well as from hurting himself with a stick, and said with affection when he came near: "Well, I see you. Go play..."

Anna fiercely denied that she and her children would ever again face the conditions of deprivation that characterized her drug-using past. Although this was framed as positive and determined, it also seemed as if to ward off anxieties about potentially facing such challenges in the future. She revealed some uncertainty about her power to influence her son’s outcomes, for example, with respect to Darnell's potential for involvement in drugs and gangs, she said, "I was gonna tell him about it. An’...I'm gonna let him make the decision, you know. But I hope he don't." Still, Anna takes pride in her recent accomplishments.

Every day I'm doing something constructive. I'm going to school and then I'm coming home and doing my homework. And then I'm back out there again gain' back to school. And then on the weekends I have time with my family—my other two kids....And I go to my meetings and just stay in the house, you know—catch up on my reading or spend quality time with my kids.

In July 2001 Anna responded to follow-up efforts, and in a brief telephone call indicated that she continues to live with her parents and holds the same job as she did a year before.
**Regina, Jesus, Ramon, Fatima, Carmina, and Lela**

Regina is a 30-year-old Latina mother of 5 children, Jesus (13), Ramon (11), Fatima (9), Carmina (8), and Lela (3). She did not finish high school and has very little work experience. Prior to CalWORKs involvement, she was often profoundly dissatisfied with her life in general and her children in particular, frequently describing them as "crazy" or as "brats." Before enrolling in a CalWORKs training program, she spent most of her time watching television, unable or unwilling to plan daily activities outside of the home: "all I do is watch TV, really...I just watch anything that comes on." In early interviews with Regina, her answers to most questions consisted of only one or two words. She showed very little emotion other than irritation, communicating, for the most part, in a slow monotone. Her 3-year-old daughter, Lela, was not attending preschool and spent her days watching Nickelodeon. The other four children were often around the house during interviews, even those that occurred during school hours. Their home was often dark, with the shades drawn, and the children did not play during the interviews. The family had no known history of child welfare services involvement, however the children were known to have a variety of difficulties. These included dental problems and health problems such as chronic asthma in the youngest child, Lela; and stealing and chronic truancy by three of the older children.

When the interviews began, the relationships between Regina and her children seemed to be at best, either empty or strained. Regina seemed to view most of her children's behaviors as efforts to annoy her, and was observed several times dismissing or ignoring their bids for attention or help. She did not appear to enjoy their company and
seemed to resent their needs. Over time, Regina revealed in a variety of ways that her children demanded more of her than she felt able to give, both economically and emotionally. She responded to this apparent sense of inadequacy with a brittle defensiveness, one that placed distance between her children and herself.

Regina began receiving AFDC in 1993 when she and her first husband separated. For 2 years, she was employed at a warehouse packaging fruits and vegetables, but she said that her resulting employment income was not high enough at the time to disqualify her from AFDC. She also worked cleaning homes at various points in time, collecting cash "under the table." Four years after her divorce, Regina moved away from her home community to escape an abusive boyfriend. Having left behind most of her family, this move increased her sense of loneliness and left her with limited social support.

The year after arriving in her new community, Regina was employed at a drugstore for 3 months, but was forced to quit, she said, because of childcare difficulties. A live-in cousin was watching the children, she said, and:

\[
\text{they didn't listen to her. They don't listen to me, they don't listen to nobody...they were getting in more trouble, they wasn't doing their homework, they wasn't doing nothing....I liked being away from the house and stuff, but still I had to worry all the time....I was getting calls [at work] five, six times a day because of them.}
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After leaving the drugstore position, Regina did not return to work, instead depending on TANF—and the income of her boyfriend—to meet the needs of her family. At the point in time when interviews began, Regina received a grant of $951, along with $50 child support, $324 food stamps, and about $40 worth of WIC coupons. She lived with her

boyfriend, Jesus, who was employed as a painter and paid for a significant amount of the household expenses. Although Jesus' work hours and income are dependent upon the weather, some months he is able to earn more than $3,000, Regina said. She also reported that Jesus was responsible for the household finances (she gives her TANF check to him), and for paying their $1,100 rent each month. Before living with Jesus, she frequently had to borrow money from her sister and her mother.

Regina reports recurrent problems with her children. Her 13-year-old son has consistently cut school, a problem that Regina is aware could result in a reduced TANF grant. She does not feel that it is her responsibility to ensure that he attends school, however, and resents both her son's behavior and the stance of the welfare department. "I send him to school. If he's not at school then that's his problem...not mine...it wasn't my fault." In exasperation over his behavior, Regina recently sent her son to live with relatives, saying that he had refused to obey her rules.

In August 1999, Regina attended a CalWORKs assessment and orientation and then began 12 weeks of training at a flower arranging school. This training opportunity had a dramatic impact on Regina and her family. Regina felt the training reduced her stress and improved her mood, contributing to a better relationship between Regina and her children. She stated that she enjoyed the school, especially appreciating the opportunity to get out of the house each day.

I'm not stressed...I'm getting out of the house, I'm not just sitting here locked [in] all the time...When I was home, I was lazy and now I'm out...I'm not mad all day. Now
I go out and do what I want to do. Go to my class, come home, and then start my dinner. And the day goes by faster now.

Regina said that after spending the day in training she simply felt tired, rather than angry. With her new daily activities, there was a noticeable difference in Regina's interview style. She became much more animated, was far more engaged in the interviews, and spoke with pleasure about flower arranging. The instructors were "nice," she said, and the class was progressing quickly in their skills: "We're doing our first funeral tomorrow...we've only been in there 2 weeks, and they usually don't do them that fast...I'm learning. Taught me how to make bows. How to cut flowers, how to take care of them." After months of insisting, "I don't plan nothin'," Regina obtained an appointment book with her new job and seemed to welcome further interviews, adding "when you come again, my house will be all full of flowers." Perhaps most importantly, Regina felt that her involvement with the flower-arranging school had a positive impact on her relationship with her children. Prior to attending school, she said, the children "would stay away from me. Now they go in the room with me and everything...now they stay home with me." The children had told her that she seemed to be a happier person "now that I'm not always yelling at them." After transitioning into work and seeing a paycheck, she commented that "I went to school and now I'm working just to make it better for my kids...trying to get them what...they want."

Regina did not utilize any outside daycare providers while she was participating in welfare-to-work, instead leaving her youngest child with the older siblings or with friends. She thus did not incur any cost related to child care. CalWORKs provided Regina with

$45 per month to cover the cost of gas for her car so she could get to the training each
day. Regina did not feel this was enough to offset her transportation costs: she figured her
gas and parking costs were actually over $100/month. Thus, although her TANF grant
amount did not change and her costs actually increased, Regina seemed to appreciate
the other changes the program brought.

After completing the training program in January 2000, Regina took a job at a
grocery store. Although she was hoping to get placed in the flower department of the
grocery chain, she instead was sent to work stocking shelves. This was a source of
tremendous displeasure for Regina, who had many complaints about her coworkers and
was dissatisfied with her daily tasks. Although the managers at the grocery store told her
she would eventually be placed in the flower department, she felt unwilling to wait and
was angry that she was unable to gain further experience arranging flowers. Her hourly
pay at the grocery store was $7.75/hour, resulting in weekly earnings of $250. Regina did
not feel this was adequate income. She hoped to soon be able to quit the grocery store,
and take a job at the flower shop of a local hotel. Although this job might increase
Regina's hourly wages, perhaps more importantly it would allow her to engage in an
activity that would have a positive psychological impact.

After the last interview in January 2000, Regina did not show up for two scheduled
meetings and failed to return any telephone calls. Efforts to follow up with her in May 2001
received no response.
Francesca, Tommy, Veronica, and Klarissa

Francesca is a 36-year-old Latina, the mother of Tommy, Veronica, and Klarissa (ages 10, 8, and 2, respectively). After graduating from high school and spending 6 months at a local community college, she quit school and went to work in a warehouse. There, she spent approximately 1 year on the assembly line and then began working at the local post office. Although she was using crack cocaine, Francesca stated that her drug use, while working for the warehouse, was recreational. At the post office, a girlfriend introduced her to heroin and that's when, she said, her addiction took hold and she "began to lose everything....I lost my job—it was because of going in late. Missing days because of drugs...."

After being fired from her job at the post office, Francesca began prostituting to support herself. From age 20 to 25, she continued to use heroin, while alternately living at her father's house, with one of her siblings, and frequently on the street.

In 1988 her son Tommy was born and in 1990 she had a daughter, Veronica, each child with a different father. Shortly after Veronica's birth, Francesca was arrested and spent approximately 2 weeks in jail. Both of her children were placed in foster care during her incarceration. Once Francesca was released, she regained custody of her daughter, but her son was placed by the child welfare agency with his maternal grandmother, who receives a foster care payment for his care to this day. According to Francesca, her son is doing very well with his grandmother: "he's really smart and quiet and logical...it's like talking to a little man." Tommy's positive development in the care of

his grandmother is the major reason, Francesca says, that she has not attempted to reunify with her son.

Francesca and Veronica were homeless for much of the 1990s, along with Veronica's father, who was also addicted to illegal drugs and was employed very sporadically. He did not provide consistent monetary support for his family and often took his daughter panhandling. Francesca was receiving AFDC and food stamps during this period, but relied on prostitution to substantially supplement the family's income. In late 1998, Francesca gave birth to another daughter, Klarissa. Throughout most of her pregnancy, Francesca, Veronica, and Manueolo (Veronica's father) lived in a van parked in a residential neighborhood.

*It was me, their father and I was pregnant with Klarissa. My whole pregnancy was living in a van with Klarissa. And when I had her I said, "oh my God, she can't come in the van." It was wintertime and it had a leak and it was raining and water was coming in, it was cold in there, you know. And I thought, "how am I going to bring a newborn baby into this van, you know? She'll die of freezing"....Well, their dad said, " when you have her we're just going to have to start hustling for motels." So that's what we did. We went to a motel and then he would watch her, and I would go make money [through prostitution].*

Then in 1999, just before the birth of her second daughter, Francesca stopped using drugs and began methadone treatment. Along with methadone, she was taking medication for a chronic medical condition as well as for clinical depression. Due to these medical conditions, Francesca was exempt from the work requirements under welfare
reform during the time she received benefits through TANF. (As we will see, Francesca later applied for SSI and was approved, thereby no longer receiving TANF for herself and also no longer subject to the TANF welfare-to-work rules.)

Shortly after Klarissa's birth, Francesca's relationship with Manuela ended and Francesca and her daughters began moving between motels and homeless shelters. In January 2000, Francesca was approved for housing assistance from Shelter Plus Care, a federal program administered by Housing and Urban Development. This aid allowed Francesca and her daughters to move into a small house where Francesca paid $37/month rent. In addition to Shelter Plus, she received WIC, MediCal, and food stamps along with her monthly TANF grant of $505. Under California's family cap, Francesca's TANF grant did not increase with the birth of her third child. She did, however, receive an increase in her food stamps and her baby was eligible for MediCal. Before she obtained housing assistance, she was receiving approximately $289 per month in food stamps. Once she moved into her house, her food stamps were cut to $189, due to her low rental costs. In April 2000, Francesca was approved for SSI and in July 2000 began to receive $497/month from SSI. Once she was removed from the TANF grant, Francesca reported that the grant amount changed from $505 to a child-only grant for Veronica, of $159. These changes produced a net income increase of $1,511/month. [It should be noted that these figures may be somewhat inaccurate, but reflect Francesca's recollection of her income sources and amounts at the time.]

Prior to Francesca's receipt of housing assistance, while the family was living at a motel, Veronica was molested on her way to visit a neighbor. This event prompted
another episode of child protective services intervention, this time involving both Veronica and Klarissa. Both children were quickly returned to Francesca's care, but the incident took a serious emotional toll. Veronica has since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of "chronic transience, homelessness and witness of domestic violence and verbal abuse between her parents," according to a court report. A 6-month review done by child welfare services in March 2000 stated that Veronica "is in need of consistent support and emotional attachment from her mother. [The therapist] is concerned that given the mother's high levels of anxiety and limited coping skills, she may be unable to deal with her own issues as well as [her daughter's]." Francesca's case plan for 2000 ordered that she enroll in parenting classes, maintain an adequate home, continue her sobriety, and ensure that Veronica attends school and that her medical and emotional needs are met. In addition, the child welfare case plan mandated Francesca's involvement in employment activities, through CalWORKs. Francesca thought this to be unrealistic, given the other demands on her time and the logistical challenges of ensuring that she and the children made it to their various appointments.

Beginning in 2000, Klarissa and Veronica were enrolled in daycare so that Francesca could pursue parenting classes. Although CalWORKs was responsible for payment to the daycare provider, payment was refused for several months due to a paperwork error. Fortunately, while the error was being corrected, the child welfare agency paid for the children's care (through Francesca's request to her favorite child welfare worker). Although it was unclear whether and how the parenting classes were of help to Francesca in her parenting, the relatively ready access to child care helped

Francesca complete many of her other daily activities—such as attending her methadone clinic and psychotherapy appointments. (Since she relied on public transportation—bus and train—a trip to the methadone clinic could take 3 hours, total, and was much simpler without the children in tow). Unfortunately, the children's behavior proved to be too difficult for the first child care provider, who requested that they leave. Francesca located another provider through a flyer in the local park, and Klarissa and Veronica attempted to adapt to this new situation, with negligible success. Veronica was frequently worried, when out of her mother's care and company, that something terrible would happen (such as her mother being arrested), and she would be abandoned. When her fears were tapped for any reason—such as her mother being late to pick her up, for example—Veronica would become destructive, loud, and difficult for adults to control. Francesca was committed to helping her oldest daughter cope, but at the same time found her behavior exasperating and difficult to manage. Klarissa, while a temperamentally easier child than her older sister, also tended toward behaving in dangerous ways, repeatedly testing her mother's capacities to successfully and calmly intervene.

Thus, Francesca's relationship with each child had a mutually intense, chaotic quality that generated a constant need for attention. Her experience of both her children was one of unremitting demands placed upon her as a caregiver. This was true, as well, of the environment in which they lived. The first 6 months of the interview period coincided with the longest stable housing arrangement the family had experienced, in years. The house was undoubtedly considered a home, but it was also mildewing, infested with rats,
and located next door to a loosely chained pit bull, in a dangerous neighborhood. Francesca cherished the positive effect of her recovery and their home on her children, as well as herself, but she feared the fragility of it all: "I've got a place for them, you know, I'm actually having a life...and I don't want to ruin it." She experienced deep and chronic financial strain regarding the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter. She spoke of being unable (in the past) to give her children a roof over their heads, and of her willingness to consider risking her life (while prostituting) in order to "pay the bills" and provide them with a place to stay. Her physical and emotional availability was limited as a result of the strains of daily life, and while she had reasons to be hopeful about the future she also felt constrained by the conditions of poverty in which they lived. She often felt "nervous" as a parent, and linked her anxiety to economic stress, in addition to the children's behavior and the loneliness of single parenting: "Havin' to do everything on my own...the bills...worryin' if I'm gonna make it at the end of the month..."

Francesca had few sources of positive social support, which, combined with her financial insecurity, resulted in a high degree of stress. Without friends or family members on whom she could rely, Francesca felt that she alone was responsible for ensuring that all the bills were paid and that her children received adequate care.

*I'm getting lonely and I don't have very many friends and I don't have too many people to talk to an' it's like all on me...It jus' get too overwhelming for me, you know. I jus' feel like it's all loaded on my shoulders an' I gotta do it. These kids need me, you know. An' I can't just flunk out. Like there's days it takes everything I got, to get Veronica to school. I get bummed out an' I jus' wanna lay there.*

Francesca believes the high degree of stress she is under impacts her ability to parent her daughters. "I end up kinda takin' it out on the kids because I get so stressed out that I'll snap at 'em. I don't hit 'em but I'll snap at 'em, like, 'jus' leave me alone, guys, God, can' I have a break?'" After Francesca began her recovery from addiction, she rarely chose to associate with her former friends, many of whom were still actively using drugs. Francesca generally recognized the fragility of her sobriety, and expressed the feeling that if she were to reconnect with past friends, she would be jeopardizing her recovery. "It seems like when I'm around them [old friends] that feeling comes triggering back, you know, that old lifestyle…I could ‘slip’ that easy, so I stay away from those people." On one occasion, however, she allowed an old, actively drug using friend to live with her for 2 weeks. This led to conflict with her eldest daughter, Veronica (who did not like Francesca’s friend and her behavior) and trouble with the neighbors, so Francesca insisted that the woman move out of her home. Although her prioritization of her recovery process was important, the choice left her feeling isolated as well.

Child welfare services requirements created a great deal of stress for Francesca during this time, demanding that she be a consistent support for her daughters and attend parenting classes and therapy. As noted earlier, although she was exempt from CalWORKs participation, her child welfare case plan included work activities something that Francesca thought to be impossible, unfortunately. Francesca hoped to someday return to work but did not feel it was something she could undertake during the interview period.
I have so many things that I want to do...I want to go to school and I want to do this and I want to become this, I want a good job and I want to get a car. You know, I want to be part of society again. And I've got this other part of me that's: “man, you've got too many issues right now.” I've got a lot of problems and a lot of hurt inside, got a lot of anger that I need to deal with.

The absence of support from friends or a partner exacerbated Francesca's depression, and it seemed likely that the stress of facing multiple demands on her time could threaten her sobriety as well as her physical and mental health. Further, Francesca expressed many complaints about her relationship with her child welfare worker, feeling she was not understanding. She repeatedly expressed the fear that the worker would take away her children without giving Francesca an adequate opportunity to display her parenting abilities. "She doesn't like me—she had me pegged from my file, without knowing me."

Thus, although Francesca is a woman who generally does not shy away from formal supports—whether agencies or individuals—she perceived her child welfare worker as a threat to her parenting.

Finally, although the presence of the public child welfare services agency increased the number of demands on Francesca's time, it also offered her resources that helped to decrease her financial strain. When Francesca moved into her new home, the child welfare services agency provided her with furniture such as a bed and a kitchen table, which increased her feelings of pride in her home and the motivation to maintain it. In addition, the agency assisted with transportation costs, providing her with both a bus pass and reimbursement for BART expenses for several months. Child welfare workers
also offered to help her to establish a payment plan for her numerous traffic tickets so that she would eventually be able to regain her driver's license. (These services were time-limited, and Francesca eventually reported that she had been deemed ineligible for further supports of the kind.)

A little over a year after moving into the family home, everything changed for Francesca and her daughters. The neighbors, about whom Francesca had frequently complained as nosy and intrusive, called the child welfare agency and reported that Francesca had been physically abusive to Klarissa. Francesca explained what happened, during a follow-up interview in August 2001.

*Klarissa had gotten into my makeup bag and got lipstick all over her. She came downstairs and had it head to toe...so I put her in the bathtub and got the makeup off her face but couldn't get it off her knees...it was hot so I put her in a dress...we were outside and (the neighbors) were there drinkin'...and said "look at those bruises on Klarissa!" So she (the neighbor) went and called CPS. Veronica tried telling the lady "it's makeup," but the neighbor didn't believe her....the emergency CPS worker comes in, and...pulled Veronica out of school. The worker comes and says that...you're beating your kids with a belt. I don't even own a belt...I showed her the makeup...I was so angry...I used baby oil and a cotton ball and it came off Klarissa. She goes "I'm not satisfied"...flagged down the police....I was so mad, I showed all the food, said "look at my cupboards," the house was clean...*

Once the children had been placed in foster care, Veronica reportedly told the CPS worker about a friend of Francesca's who had stayed in their home and had a crack pipe
in her possession. Francesca insisted that Veronica had lied about this and had been confused, that "if I knew somebody was using drugs in my house, I wouldn't let them..."

Then, one of her regular UA (urine analysis) tests came back positive for alcohol (whether at a level of .20 or .02, Francesca was not clear). She admitted having a glass of wine to deal with her emotional state after the children were removed, but insisted that she never had an alcohol problem. She missed a parenting class because of a dental appointment, saying "I got proof (of the dentist appointment)," and that "my teeth are so bad because of the methadone that I need root canals." Francesca, who was temporarily living with her mother and oldest son while working on her case plan, said "they made it sound like I was definitely getting my kids back," and asserted that she had done "everything required" of her, to meet the case plan. Just prior to the follow-up interview, however, she learned that the children would not be returned to her at a hearing 3 months after their removal. She was extremely upset, and talked of how her counselor had not written a letter on her behalf to the court:

She felt that I wasn't using drugs but I still had my behavior of being around drug addicts...she said, "you still seem to hang around the same people"....I thought that was true, but I didn't have anybody in my life, you know, I didn't have anybody to talk to, I was always by myself with the kids. And it's like, they popped into my life and we'd become friends, and we'd talk, and...I've known Jackie since I was a little girl...but they were sayin' they were the wrong kind of people that I was hangin' around because they went to the methadone clinic...
The methadone clinic seemed to offer both benefits and challenges, to Francesca. "I thought of this (the methadone) as being able to function," she said, but "just being around those people at the clinic gets me in trouble." During the follow-up interview, the phone rang. It was Francesca's attorney, calling about a new UA test that had turned up positive for PCP. Francesca was angry and upset, insisting that she didn't do PCP. Instead, she said, she had accepted a ride home from the clinic, with some people who were smoking weed in the car. "I knew it smelled funny, and somebody said something about it," so maybe, she proposed, she had picked up PCP just by being in the car. "I'm not stupid to take a hit of weed and go give a UA...and not get my kids back."
PATHWAYS FROM WELFARE TO CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES: A BRIEF COMMENT ON EACH CASE

The following commentaries identify some of the possible pathways through which welfare reform may have affected the child welfare outcomes in each case. These are not definitive and are likely not complete; in no case could a cause-effect relationship be established between aspects of a family’s welfare involvement and their child welfare status. In addition, in every case there were undoubtedly influences that went unnoticed or unaccounted for, such as social relationships never mentioned by the parent or private feelings about parenting that were never spoken aloud. For these reasons, the comments below are intended to initiate discussion about potential pathways of influence and speculation about the ways that different interventions might have altered the outcomes.

Leticia and Dashon

Possible outcome 2: Decreased family income due to punitive aspects of welfare reform (family cap, sanctions, time limits) could create economic conditions that lessen the likelihood of successful reunification (and potentially increase the chances of reentry for those who reunify).

Dashon and his sister's reentry to foster care seemed to be, in the most immediate sense, a result of their mother's relapse on crack cocaine. However, it is possible that Leticia's relapse and the decline of her parenting capacities were associated with poverty-related factors that included the effects of welfare programs. Although there is limited information available about the events that occurred between the last interview (May 2000) and the follow-up contact (May 2001), several possibilities can be pieced together regarding Leticia's circumstances.
Leticia may have reached her 2-year time limit during the interim period and she also would have been sanctioned for nonparticipation in welfare-to-work. Although she was employed, she was not working the required minimum of 32 hours per week. It is also highly unlikely that she could have completed the 32 hours per week community service that would have been required to keep her full TANF grant. With a sanction, her grant amount would have dropped to $319 per month. She then had a baby in October 2000 and stopped working altogether. Because of the family cap, she would have received no additional funds for her infant. Thus, three individuals were living on an official welfare income of $319 per month. Leticia would have faced increased costs associated with the new baby even if she were breastfeeding. The cost of diapers, alone (about $40 per month) would have accounted for 13% of her income. Thus, there is good reason to believe that in the couple of months prior to her relapse, Leticia’s economic situation was particularly precarious.

In brief, it is clear that her income would have dropped significantly in proportion to her family size and her expenses would have gone up. This would have left her in a position of further reliance on non-TANF sources of income. Such sources could have included work, but her lack of education and job skills, and additional barriers would make this a difficult option. With a new baby she would have had only 6 months in which she was not required to work. Her recovery program was already assisting her as much as was possible in concrete terms. Reliance on the father of her child may have been problematic since it was known that she had ambivalent feelings about him and about having another child. It is unknown why she got back in contact with her relative, but it

may have been a combination of factors including the emotional birth of a child and economic factors. Finally, while Leticia had an open case with the child welfare agency during the period when she had called for help with her rent, as of December 1999 the case had been closed. Thus, when she faced these new difficulties the child welfare agency was no longer monitoring her and was not immediately available to help her until her children were removed.

Kenisha, Ketanya, Shaunel, Dacey, Olisa, and Demarco

Possible outcome 12: The psychological impact of a new policy environment for low-income parents could have an unknown effect on parental stress, motivation, and behavior. These effects can be thought of as separate from the concrete stipulations of welfare reform (e.g., time limits, work requirements).

Welfare reform seems to have been an important piece of the complicated set of motivations that Kenisha experienced to stabilize her life—including both her economic situation and her parenting. Reforms in the welfare system seemed, at least in part, to contribute a sense of fear—as she felt that welfare would no longer provide a safety net on which she could fall back, when needed. "If I don't work, then I can't take care of my kids, I can't get welfare, you know—or I'm not entitled to certain things...It's like, you know, trapping an animal or something." The existence of time limits, sanctions, and the family cap leave her feeling forced to achieve economic self-sufficiency. She sought and found a job without any assistance from CalWORKs and appeared for many months to be a dedicated member of the workforce, taking little time away from her job even after the birth of her son. With a history of inconsistent employment and bad credit, she feels her earning potential is limited. "I feel like no matter how hard I work, I'm still going to just
be able to keep my head above water. I'm not going to be able to do great things."
Without being able to depend on welfare as a supplement, Kenisha will be solely
responsible for providing for her children from her earnings. This creates a high degree
of stress for her, leaving her worried that she will never achieve economic security. At the
same time, she repeatedly spoke of feelings that she was making up for lost time, that
she was doing right by her children, and that through her job she was becoming a part of
society in ways she had never before experienced.

Now I feel like I'm back in the system in a good way. You know, [laughter]—not in a
bad way....I feel like I'm back on the map. [Laughter] Do you know what I
mean?...I'm being something and doing stuff, you know, whereas—before, you
know, it was like I was nobody and you know—didn't nobody give a damn and now
since I'm paying...taking care of my responsibilities and working and stuff...people
that care for me, you know, and—even bill collectors and when you pay your
bills...they say thank you and...then they give your name to somebody else—you
know, they—[laughter] get you further in debt, you know, so—it makes me—feel
like I'm somebody now.

Glen and Tasha

Possible outcome 7: Services made available or accessible through the use of
TANF dollars, whether specifically intended (e.g., domestic violence counseling, child
care) or through the creative and flexible application of TANF dollars (e.g., for family
preservation-type services in innovative counties) could be used to prevent some families
from entering child welfare services and promote successful exits from child welfare
services, for others.

Case management for public child welfare workers. Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley,
CalSWEC.
Glen is a short-term user of TANF who did not require or use welfare-to-work services to transition off welfare. Neither TANF dollars nor child welfare services funds were used to pay for his participation in the drug-treatment program. However, the initial TANF grant made his reunification with Tasha possible, and the daycare subsidy he secured through CalWORKs provided a vital ongoing form of support. Without this subsidy Glen's financial situation would be far more precarious, given the uncertainty of his employment income and the fact that he must be able to work as many hours as possible to meet his expenses each month. Additionally, coverage of move-in costs by the child welfare agency provided a vital support. Although Glen was relieved to have the child welfare agency out of his life, it remains an open question whether he might have benefited from ongoing or follow-up services of some kind, as time went on and he continued to adjust to single parenthood. Like other parents in this study, many of Glen's family and friends had used drugs and therefore were not uncomplicated sources of support for him, should his economic or other personal circumstances become too much to bear on his own.

Anna, Kiera, Keshon, and Darnell

Possible outcome 6: Increased employment due to welfare-to-work program involvement could increase income and positively influence parental behavior and well-being so that maltreatment and the likelihood or intensity of child welfare services interventions could decrease for some families.

Anna's participation in school and work activities has given her a new confidence in her abilities as a parent as well as increasing her current income. Her commitment to her education is likely improving her future employment options as well. She now feels
herself to be more of a role model for her children, actively helping them with their homework and spending time with them, reading books and playing games—and by Anna's report, the children are responding positively to the changes in her. TANF dollars supported the older children's care with their maternal grandmother during Anna's time in the treatment program. In these ways, the welfare system indirectly supports Anna's recovery and her relationship with her children, possibly decreasing the likelihood of future child welfare intervention, including a reentry to foster care for her children.

**Regina, Jesus, Ramon, Fatima, Carmina, and Lela**

*Possible outcome 6: Increased employment due to welfare-to-work program involvement could increase income and positively influence parental behavior and well-being, so that risk of maltreatment and the need for child welfare services could decrease for some families.*

Although there was no known history of child welfare services involvement for this family and no signs of maltreatment were observed, the relationships between Regina and her children were far from optimal. The family may have utilized other community services (besides child welfare services), although Regina denied this was the case: at a minimum, it was known that she had been contacted by her children's schools regarding their truancy. Even though Regina was aware of the possibility of a financial penalty because of the children's school non-attendance, she seemed unable or unwilling to take an active role in changing this. There are likely many reasons for the poor quality of Regina's parenting and her relationship with her children, but her apparent depression was, no doubt, a key contributor. The change in Regina and her relationship with her children was striking and coincided with her initial involvement in welfare-to-work.
activities. With the combination of a new daily routine and a feeling that she had earned the cash on hand, her self-esteem and sense of control over her life appeared to improve, her mood lifted, and the children responded accordingly. Thus, welfare-to-work activities seemed to have a direct effect on the quality of the family relationships. Regina could have, but did not, take advantage of child care opportunities through CalWORKs. Depending upon the quality of child care available, such an option might be positive for the youngest child, Lela, potentially offering her a more stimulating and positive environment than being supervised at home by her older siblings.

**Francesca, Tommy, Veronica, and Klarissa**

Possible outcomes 5, and 7: Some families who are involved with both welfare and child welfare services may experience increased stress because of lack of effective agency coordination, thereby decreasing chances of successful child welfare outcomes. At the same time, some families may receive services through the child welfare agency that act as an economic and social buffer, leading them to avoid some negative repercussions they might have otherwise experienced under welfare reform.

Francesca has clearly faced many challenges as she attempts to successfully parent her children and exit the child welfare system. Although committed to her continuing recovery and to raising her youngest children on her own, she struggled daily to make it to appointments, to make ends meet, and to manage her children's emotional needs and behavioral demands.

The requirements of her child welfare case plan both provided structure for Francesca and also pushed her functional capacities to the limit on a regular basis. Similarly, Francesca had a strongly ambivalent relationship with the child welfare system in general, and her child welfare workers in particular. She spoke fondly of at least one
child welfare worker who had been emotionally supportive early in her child welfare services career and also spoke with bitterness about those who, she felt, misunderstood and misjudged her. The child welfare system provided her with crucial concrete supports (such as help with the costs of moving into the family's first apartment, transportation costs, and time-limited coverage of her child care costs) and advocacy (such as setting up a payment plan for the traffic tickets).

For Francesca, her social isolation and her marginal economic conditions had serious implications. The experience of singly trying to raise her children in conditions of poverty without relying on old means of coping (both economically and emotionally) tested her. It seems worth questioning whether Francesca's case plan, which focused on activities such as parenting classes, methadone maintenance, and individual psychotherapy, adequately addressed her underlying difficulties. It is also worth pondering whether, and to what extent, Francesca's economic conditions played a role in her continuing problems. Certainly the intermittent financial assistance she received from the child welfare agency was helpful, especially given that she was subject to the family cap and therefore received no TANF benefits for her youngest child. An increased income was a necessity, and SSI was a viable and meaningful alternative. To expect Francesca to succeed as both a recovering addict and a parent of two children, given her (pre-SSI) cash income of $505 per month, seems unrealistic. Attempting legal means of employment, however (as suggested in her child welfare case plan), seems even more unrealistic. What kinds of supports might have been provided through the welfare

department or the child welfare agency that might have helped to prevent the children's reentry into foster care?

The exact nature of the events that led to the children's removal, in May 2001, remains unclear. They are difficult to assess based only on Francesca's frank insistence that she did nothing to harm her children, that she had not relapsed into drug use, and that she is in fact a victim of a misguided CPS intervention. By Francesca's own admission, however, she had spent time with people who were actively using drugs. She realized the riskiness of these associations, but felt trapped by her current need for regular visits to the methadone clinic and her need for contact with friends. Perhaps the dilemmas faced by Francesca, including the effects of her precarious economic situation, are best exemplified by her decision to accept a ride home from the methadone clinic from people who she knew to be actively using drugs. This decision saved her the expense of a bus ride and a significant amount of time, and offered her a chance for social interaction with other familiar adults, but it also may have contributed to a negative outcome for Francesca and her children.
Figure 2: Welfare Reform’s Potential Effects on Child Welfare: The Case of ______________

Welfare System/TANF

- Benefit levels influenced by sanctions, penalties, time limits, and the family cap
- Earnings disregards, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Expectation of participation in work activities
- Exemptions and services for those with special barriers and needs
- Child care, other work supports
- Other behavioral expectations (e.g., school attendance, immunizations, no drug felonies)
- Eligibility limitations for immigrants

Effects on Parent

- Parental mental health, psychological well-being
- Social relationships
- Substance use/abuse

Family Functioning and Structure

- Parent-child relationship quality, child abuse and/or neglect
- Use of child care and adequate supervision during work activities
- Family/household structure (fertility, partnerships/marriage, shifts toward use of informal/voluntary kinship care)

Systemic Effects

- Move from AFDC to TANF creates changes in funding, organizational structure, service delivery model, and philosophy

Child Welfare Outcomes

- Maltreatment reports
- Substantiated maltreatment
- Service involvement
- Placement in out-of-home care
- Length, intensity of service
- Type of exit from systems
- Reentries to systems

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

• Students who are currently doing direct practice should use a client to examine the relationship between involvement in the welfare and child welfare system. Has this client been impacted by welfare reform? Has his/her relationship with child welfare been affected? Have you noticed changes in the parent’s relationship with his/her child? Review the client’s case using the questions provided in the Group Activity: Case Example.

• Examine all of the case examples and look for strengths and weaknesses that may have led families to a particular outcome. Is there a consistent set of strengths or supports that give families a greater chance of positive outcome? Are there any particular factors that seem to contribute negatively?

• Write a case plan for the family in the case example you examined during the group activity. What services would you provide the family? What resources does this family need? What goals would you set with this parent?
MODULE V

APPLYING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS TOWARD IMPROVING CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

MODULE V
APPLYING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS TOWARD
IMPROVING CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

Purpose

- To explain the study design, make qualitative methods accessible to practitioners, and apply aspects of qualitative research methodologies to improve the quality of child welfare practice.

Content

- This section of the curriculum describes the study design and methodology used to gather the data supporting Chapters III and IV.
- Using this study's methods as a case example, the chapter also offers suggestions for transferring the skill base of qualitative research to child welfare practice.

Use

- This section can be used to familiarize students with selected qualitative research methods.
- Instructors are encouraged to use this chapter as a way of demystifying qualitative research methods as well as addressing a key set of social work practice skills.

Teaching Aids

- A suggested group activity, provided at the end of the chapter, is intended to encourage practice applying certain qualitative methodologies to child welfare practice and critically examining their usefulness.

This chapter can be used to foster the following curriculum competencies:

1.9  Student understands and uses knowledge in the provision of child welfare services to cultural and ethnic populations.

2.4  Student gathers, evaluates, and presents pertinent information from informants, case records, and other collateral sources to support or refute an abuse or neglect allegation.

3.1  Student demonstrates social work values and principles; this includes self-determination, respect for human dignity and worth, and respect for individual differences.

3.2 Student conducts effective ongoing case assessment and planning.

3.3 Student demonstrates the ability to evaluate and incorporate information from others, including family members and professionals in assessment, treatment planning, and service delivery.

3.4 Student conducts effective casework interviews.

3.5 Student understands the importance of and demonstrates the ability to work with the client in the community, including home, school, etc.

6.4 Student understands how to use information and technology to evaluate practice and program effectiveness.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

• While reading the description of the data collection methods used in this study, make notes on your reactions. What aspects of this approach would be easy for you to implement and what aspects would challenge you the most? Why?

• After reading the description of the data collection methods used in this study, do you think they were the most effective way to go about understanding the effects of welfare reform on child welfare? What other methods can you imagine using? What might be some of the tradeoffs of using a different method for studying these issues?

• Imagine that you are Francesca's child welfare worker and a researcher contacts you requesting your help in recruiting a sample for this qualitative study. Would you consider asking Francesca to talk with the researcher? Why or why not? What might Francesca stand to gain and/or lose, as a result of her participation? What, if anything, might you stand to gain or lose as a result of her participation? Outline the implications of either decision.

• Recall that all study subjects were told they would be paid $25.00 per interview for their participation. Do you think this is too much, or too little? Explain your reasoning.

• Read the box marked ethical dilemmas. How would you have handled this situation? Do you think it is the researcher's obligation to intervene in this situation, or not? If so, what do you think about the intervention chosen by the researcher in this case? Can you suggest alternatives? How would you feel if you were Francesca's child welfare worker and you were aware of the remuneration amount? Would you choose to intervene anyway?
APPLYING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS TOWARD IMPROVING CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE

Qualitative research methods have tremendous practice relevance for the child welfare field. The depth and richness that can be captured in qualitative studies complement the powerful potentialities of quantitative research. Quantitative research methods offer the opportunity to categorically describe, measure, and predict aspects of the child welfare services experience such as the differing distributions of children in foster care across age and racial groups, or the characteristics of families most likely to succeed with reunification. Quantitative methods are essential to identifying trends in the populations we serve in child welfare, to testing our assessment tools, and determining whether and how our policy decisions affect defined outcomes for groups of people. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, help us to understand the variation within those groups of people and shed light on how people think and feel about their lives. Researchers using qualitative methods often anticipate that human behavior is complicated and situational, that context is crucial to understand, and that their presence as researchers in the lives of study subjects necessarily affects the nature of what occurs. Because qualitative methods can be flexible and adapt to families' changing circumstances, they can account for the unexpected and uncover processes that were not previously identified or understood. Thus, for these reasons and others, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are essential to a well-rounded research program that informs the best child welfare practice.

Can there be any doubt that we need to mix variable-based and person-centered knowledge to help us understand what is really going on in families’ lives? Fieldwork helps us to understand families’ concerns and adaptations under the difficult circumstances that they face. Ethnographic data provide depth across all levels of analysis (ecological, social, cultural, psychological), breadth across all the topics of concern to a family, contextual complexity, and an understanding of the whole life experience of our participants. (Weisner et al., 2000).

Thus, there is an important role for qualitative data in helping us to evaluate our policy decisions, the relevance of our practice designs, and for informing the development of new interventions. In addition, many of the methods that are used in conducting qualitative research can, themselves, offer a great deal to child welfare practice. Not only do many qualitative research methods share common features with certain social work practice approaches, but they also offer important means of understanding and reflecting upon the complexities of human experience. Within the broad family of qualitative research methods are ethnography and participant observation, methods that grow primarily out of the anthropological and sociological traditions.

Ethnography and participant observation are forms of field research that can be thought of as attempting "to render our daily lives socially intelligible and meaningful by keenly observing others as well as reflecting on our own experience" (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993, p. 316). Ethnographic methods have traditionally been understood as those applied in the process of describing a culture, society, social group, or set of social behaviors, with the simple commonality that "the practice places researchers in the midst

of whatever it is they study" (Berg, 2001, p. 134). This is a characteristic shared with child welfare work, which places social workers in the center of people's daily lives with the goal of understanding their needs and intervening. Given these commonalities, certain techniques, principles, and strategies of qualitative inquiry can be used to enhance the quality and integrity of child welfare work.

This chapter discusses a selected set of these techniques including approaches to forming relationships with families, conducting interviews and effective observation, managing and analyzing information (data), and the uses of ongoing consultation. To do so, the chapter first discusses the methodology used in the present study, the qualitative research from which this curriculum was developed, and discusses the application of some of these methods for improving child welfare practice. In a sense, the detailed description of the method used here acts as its own case study, an example of one approach to conducting qualitative research. This case study of a qualitative method does not represent all qualitative methods or approaches. Similarly, this chapter is not intended to serve as a substitute for a more comprehensive course on qualitative research methods. The literature on qualitative research is extensive, and the term qualitative research itself encompasses a wide variety of philosophical and practical approaches. (For further study of qualitative methods, see resources below as places to begin.)
Chapter III, Realities of Life, on Welfare, and Living in Poverty was developed through the use of two separate methodologies. The first section, "The Experience of Parenting in Conditions of Poverty," reports data from the qualitative study that is described in the section below (regarding Chapter IV). In the second section, "The Dollars and Cents of Life on Welfare," hypothetical case profiles were first developed based on the authors’ combined research and practice experience. To create the income and expense tables, actual income and expense amounts were calculated based upon research with the appropriate sources including housing officials (to select an available apartment in a low-income, Alameda county community and to determine the rental cost), social services officials, representatives of utility companies, the USDA (regarding food stamp calculations), and the Laundromat nearby. Groceries were priced, item-by-item, during a sample shopping trip to a grocery store located near the selected apartment. (See income and expense tables for further sources.) Thus, although the case profiles in this section are hypothetical, the economic profiles are based on data that matches each profile as accurately as possible.
Chapter IV, Case Studies of Families Involved With Welfare and Child Welfare, was developed based upon data collected in a longitudinal, ethnographic study conducted between 1999 and 2001. The section below describes essential aspects of the design and method including the sampling strategy and resulting sample characteristics, data collection methods, technologies used for management of the resulting database, and analysis methods.

The Study Design

The research was designed to intensively study multiple cases over a 1-year period using a sampling strategy that would represent a range of parenting quality and experiences with the child welfare system. Each case was a family, including a child and his or her primary caregiver, and some cases included other individuals (children, partners, relatives, neighbors, service providers) as well. The study population included families with very young children who participated in TANF or CalWORKs; who lived in the predominantly urban areas of Alameda County, California, during the years 1999-2000; and who were identified as likely to be living an economically and/or socially precarious existence. Precariousness was considered to be likely if the adult had a long history of welfare receipt (defined as welfare receipt beginning in 1993), and/or involvement with the child welfare system because of child neglect. The emphasis on child neglect was due to the secondary purpose of this study, an examination of the links between conditions of poverty and child neglect (see Frame, 2001).
**Selecting the Sample**

From the population just described, subjects were purposely selected to be economically poor and likely to represent various points along a continuum of parenting quality. This is called theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or purposive sampling (Padgett, 1998).

In order to ensure there would be a range of parenting quality and experiences with the welfare and child welfare systems, two sources were used to generate the sample. The first source included families who were part of a survey of welfare recipients that was conducted by UC Berkeley's Survey Research Center (SRC) in 1993, 1997, and 2000. Employees of the SRC identified a random sample of the survey's original Alameda county respondents, and contacted them by telephone to ascertain whether they met the criteria for inclusion in the present qualitative study. (These criteria were that the parent had at least one child under 3 years old, the family was living in Alameda county and receiving a welfare grant, had received welfare during the past year, and were willing to be contacted by the researcher about the qualitative study.)

The second source for sample selection was the Alameda County Social Services Agency, Children and Family Services Division (the local public child welfare agency). After consulting with program management and supervisory staff within the agency, child welfare workers were contacted to assist in identifying possible client participants. Child welfare workers were asked to make the initial contact with clients, obtaining consent for the researcher to contact them further about the qualitative study. Workers were recruited to help through (a) posting of a flyer in public agency areas explaining the study purpose,
criteria for participation, and benefits to clients; (b) written materials provided directly to workers, including a written phone script that could be used to explain the study to clients; and (c) dozens of telephone calls to social workers, explaining the study purpose and requesting their help with recruitment. Criteria for inclusion were the same as those listed above, with the additional caveat that families' involvement with child welfare services was for reasons of neglect. (This included physical neglect, caretaker absence, and abandonment. Cases in which the primary reason for intervention was physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or exploitation were not included.)

Ultimately, the SRC located 7 out of 60 survey respondents who were considered eligible, and child welfare staff provided the researcher with contact information on 13 potential study participants. Contact was attempted with these 20 individuals by telephone and letter. Four of the 7 SRC families agreed to participate, and 6 of the 13 child welfare families proved to meet the criteria and agreed to further contact. The primary parent in these 10 families are identified by the following pseudonyms: Anna, Bernette, Francesca, Glen, Kenisha, Janet, Jennifer, Leticia, Maria, and Regina. Selected characteristics of the 10-family sample are described in Table 4 and in the box below.
Table 5: Selected Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary caregiver</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Total number living children (a/o July 2000)</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of caregiver during study period</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Caregiver living with partner (majority of study)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity of caregiver</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Age of oldest child during study period</td>
<td>3-5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16-20 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21+ yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of youngest child at study entry</td>
<td>0-6 mos.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Highest level education completed</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-12 mos.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13-18 mos.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-24 mos.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>GED + vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-30 mos.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some Comm. College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-36 mos.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36+ mos.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of income (majority of study; includes children and adult)</td>
<td>TANF only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Field of employment during study period (temporary or permanent)</td>
<td>Child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TANF + PT work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clerical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FT work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TANF + SSI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Custodial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None outside home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF grant subject to family cap</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Description

The sample of 10 primary subjects (primary caregivers) ranged in age from 28 (Maria) to 40 (Bernette) with the majority in their thirties during their involvement in the study. All had at least one child 3 years old or younger when they entered the study, and the total number of living children ranged from 1 (Glen) to 5 (Bernette); these children ranged in age from newborn to 23 years old. In a number of cases, the youngest children lived with the primary subject while older children lived outside of the home in arrangements that included relatives (grandparents), godparents, foster homes, and group homes. The majority of the sample (7 primary caregivers) was African American, 2 were Mexican American, and one was Caucasian. Nearly all children in the sample were of the same racial identity as their parents; one set of

Sample Description (cont’d)

siblings was bi-racial (their mother was African American and the father Mexican). All families lived in Alameda county during the study; one family moved to a neighboring county in the last few months of their participation in the research. All lived in impoverished neighborhoods and most lived in urban settings characterized by high-density housing, unemployment, and street crime.

The primary subject was the biological mother in 9 cases; the biological father headed one single-parent family. There was one legally married, but separated, subject in the study. One mother was engaged to be married to her boyfriend of several years, who was the father of her youngest child. Three mothers lived with partners (long-term boyfriends, fathers of at least one of their children); at least 4 of the remaining 5 adult subjects had boyfriends or partners for varying periods of time during their involvement in the study.

As a group, the families included long- and short-term recipients of public welfare (with an initial date of entry into AFDC or TANF, ranging from 1 to 18 years prior). Some had experienced no significant breaks in AFDC or TANF (Maria and Regina, for 12 and 8 years respectively), while there were others for whom AFDC or TANF provided intermittent income support over the years interspersed with periods (months and/or years) of employment and education for some (e.g., Janet, Anna), and jail or prison time for others (Leticia, Francesca). In several cases, primary subjects were incarcerated for periods of time while their children were in substitute care, but they were also employed (through legal means) during other periods (Kenisha, Jennifer, Bernette). The only truly short-term recipient of TANF support was the single father in the study (Glen) who received a TANF grant for 2 months while in the process of reunifying with his daughter and then returned to his previous means of employment (which paid far more than a TANF grant).

All families in the sample lived in relative poverty, although their level of material well-being varied, depending upon a number of factors including availability of housing, family or partner support, work or other income sources, and the capacity to manage funds. Alternatives to both legal employment and public assistance had—to a large or small degree—supplemented the income of a number of subject families (in the past and in some cases, during study involvement. These means included selling food stamps, prostitution, panhandling, and drug-related transactions but also included employment paid under the table such as housecleaning, yard work, and light construction. One subject (Leticia) had never been legally employed prior to the year of study entry when she obtained her first job and first paycheck (in her early thirties). Leticia stopped attending school in the eighth grade, and like three other subjects who had not completed high school or obtained a GED, she was qualified only for jobs that paid at or near minimum wage.
Sample Description (cont’d)

Another subject who had dropped out of school after the 8th grade (Glen) worked in the construction field with the capacity to earn a wage far above the legal minimum.

Thus, only four of the primary subjects had completed high school, and one individual obtained her GED in her early twenties. During the study period, two subjects attended Community College; three worked full time, and another part time in jobs that were obtained without the assistance of the welfare-to-work program. One subject eventually located full-time employment through a welfare-to-work training course; three others neither worked outside the home nor participated in a welfare-to-work program. Only one of these three (Francesca) was exempt (for medical reasons) from welfare-to-work participation requirements. Of the other two, one (Maria) experienced a short-term reduction in her grant for nonparticipation in CalWORKs. The other (Bernette) dropped out of the study and the impact of her nonparticipation is unknown.

All six of the families involved with public child welfare services were living with their youngest child at entry into the study. All had received child protective interventions because of neglect, abandonment, or caretaker absence (e.g., incarceration). In one case the children (ages 13 months and 8 years) were under court-ordered family maintenance services with the mother; the father had reportedly abandoned the family. In the remaining five cases, the youngest child, and in some cases the older children as well, had been removed and placed in substitute care for a period ranging from a few weeks to several months and then reunified with the parent. Several older children remained in substitute care for much longer periods, including Leticia and Jennifer's older children, who had spent years in long-term foster and kinship care (reunification efforts had long since ceased). Jennifer's two youngest children were removed a second time during the study period due to her physical abuse of the youngest, a toddler.

Certain difficulties faced in sampling and recruitment led to a final sample of families who may have been experiencing fewer stresses than others. First, recruitment efforts with child welfare workers who served the most precarious families (those just entering the system because of neglect, for example) were unsuccessful. The child welfare services group who were ultimately recruited consisted of families who had (at least initially) completed the requirements for reunification with their youngest child or children. (Many

were recruited through workers providing ongoing family preservation services). Thus, these families had accomplished at least a modicum, or more, of stability and security. Second, all the families who chose to participate in the study may be different from families who were eligible but chose not to participate. It is possible that participants were experiencing fewer stresses than other families and therefore were more functional and capable of keeping appointments and relating to a researcher than families who chose not to participate. These characteristics affected the nature of the findings and should be kept in mind when drawing conclusions. The findings based on this sample are not generalizable to a larger population of welfare recipients or child welfare clients.

Collecting the Data

Data collection consisted of multiple in-person and telephone contacts with families, using ethnographic methods of participant observation. This included unstructured and semistructured interviewing in naturalistic or everyday environments (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). Specific aspects of the data collection process for this study are described in detail, below.

The Researcher-Subject Relationship

The involvement between researchers and subjects can be thought of on a continuum ranging from full participation of the researcher in the subject's life to detached observation (Padgett, 1998). On that continuum, the approach used here could be considered observer-participant. This was a conscious and ongoing decision that was
under constant negotiation, and my\(^5\) stance shifted toward greater participation as time went on. Some of the considerations in that shifting balance of participation and observation are described here.

My role as researcher was overt at the outset (Jorgensen, 1989) and my outsider status apparent. I did not, for example, attempt to become a member of the family or a member of the community. This would not have been possible given the nature of our differences (race, class, education) or the time limitations built into the study design, nor was it considered necessary or appropriate to the study's purpose. Rather, the flexibility of method and use of naturalistic settings allowed for a relatively high degree of inside perspective on daily life; yet my status as outsider and distance from the family allowed me to ask direct questions such as, "Can you explain how to sell food stamps?"

I did, however, seek to minimize the interpersonal distance between myself and the families by cultivating a role that was defined in fairly vague terms and presenting needs that seemed diffuse enough that each family could find their own place for me in their world. Some began to consider me "like a friend" while others seemed to think of me as "like a therapist" or "someone who does studies and writes books." I did not seek to become either their friend or their therapist. I sought to observe while in the process of interacting with families, in their most familiar settings, and while living their daily lives as naturally and unobtrusively as possible, given that my presence was undeniably somewhat obtrusive. Depending upon the individual, the quality of our relationship, the

\(^5\) From this point forward, references to the researcher (the first author) will be made in first person. This acknowledges that given the nature of the qualitative study, my subjectivity was a part of the data collection and analysis process and should not be avoided.

context, and the circumstances, the level of actual participation or involvement in family life varied, and thus, at times, I became more of a participant-observer than observer-participant. My flexibility and willingness to become a participant (e.g., a spontaneous babysitter at the parent's request when needing to run a quick errand during our interview time) depended upon a variety of personal factors, as well as ethical questions and methodological desires. The wish to participate, for the richness of data it might provide, sometimes collided with the decision that I ought not to intrude or intervene. At other times, the effort to maintain interpersonal distance confounded my ability to gather data that might have been useful if I had chosen a greater degree of participation. Yet each of these experiences and decisions was documented and treated as data in itself.

My stance as observer-participant undoubtedly influenced the nature and quality of the data. I never fully entered these families' worlds; I merely visited for a few hours a month and returned to my apartment or my academic haven. Had I asked to move in with them and sleep on the couch for a week, the depth and complexity of my knowledge would have increased in many ways. But the study was not a laboratory experiment either. In my presence dinner was eaten, the phone answered, children and neighbors contended with in their backyards. The contextualized nature of the data thus rests on a balance between proximity to family life and distance from it.

**Location(s) of Data Collection**

In-person contacts most often occurred in the subjects' homes, although some interviews were conducted while walking in the park, watching children on the playground, over a milkshake in Burger King or dinner in a local restaurant, or at the

subject's workplace or internship. In-person meetings were prearranged and tended to last between 1 and 2 hours. Generally, I offered to meet "wherever you are comfortable," and where it was most convenient for the subject. Thus, most chose their home. On a few occasions I deliberately suggested an alternative meeting place. This was done in order to increase the chances of observing the parent-child relationship in a new light (given, for example, new obstacles to negotiate), to have a chance to see how children and parents played together (given the opportunity for fun activities), and in some cases, for the sake of privacy (to separate from partners, family members, and children). Sometimes a subject's impromptu need for transportation resulted in a car trip to the youth activity center, the day care facility, or the therapist's office. When in the subject's home, the researcher followed her/his lead regarding the location of the conversation. At times, this led to conversations at the kitchen table or on the couch in the living room. At other times the interview occurred while walking around the apartment, standing outside on the steps, or playing with toys on the floor of the child's bedroom.

The extent of telephone contact depended upon the developing relationship with the adult subject. Some engaged in lengthy conversations about life events over the phone. Others primarily used the phone to arrange appointments and discuss logistics. The majority of the direct contact involved conversations with the parent. Children were frequently present and interacted with me and their parent. Other individuals were occasionally present (e.g., relatives, friends, staff of the residential treatment program, utility repairmen) and included in the conversation where appropriate, following the lead of the study subject. No efforts were made to control the presence or absence of children

during the interviews, since an essential part of data collection involved *naturalistic observation* of spontaneous parent-child interaction, while the parent was facing conflicting demands: to attend to me as well as their child.

With the exception of occasionally requesting that a television's volume be turned down for the sake of audiotaping clarity, I controlled neither the environment nor the interpersonal context. On a few occasions I requested time to just "hang out and play with" the child or children. This was done with an unstated goal of assessing developmental status and understanding the child's style of relating. Subjects were told when they entered the study that I may eventually wish to contact key informants, such as relatives or social workers, and if so, that I would first request their written consent. The option of contacting key informants, in particular, child welfare workers, was considered midway through the study and set aside until the completion of data collection and some analysis had occurred. Contacting key informants, it seemed, might alter the nature of the relationship with the primary subjects in undesirable ways and would only be done if deemed necessary for data triangulation purposes. Ultimately, no key informants were contacted.

**Interview Frequency and Remuneration (Compensation)**

The original study design called for interviews on at least a monthly basis; I attempted to follow this plan. However, scheduling difficulties and concerns about subject retention led, in some cases, to uneven interview patterns. Some were interviewed on a regular monthly basis, others had multiple-month gaps. A few subjects were interviewed weekly. This was particularly true for the two subjects who entered the study in February,
2000 (Francesca and Anna) and for whom more regular contact was necessary. Increased frequency of the interviews resulted in a more rapidly intensifying relationship with me and a different pacing of the interview content. It also led to some ethical considerations regarding the role of remuneration, given that more frequent contact led to a rather dramatically increased income in some cases.

Parents were paid $25.00 cash per interview for their participation. This arrangement was discussed during the initial recruitment phone call, at the first meeting, and in an ongoing way with many of the subjects. Subjects were assured that while I needed to obtain a signed receipt each time for accounting purposes at the University, this $25.00 addition to their income would not be reported by me to the welfare department or anywhere else. The decision to report it as income was theirs alone. The remuneration itself unexpectedly became a tool for data collection, because each individual had different feelings about the cash itself, the fact that I provided these funds and what that meant about the nature of our relationship, and the impact of study involvement on their lives.

**Recording the Data**

Nearly all field contacts and in-person interviews were audiotaped with the consent of the primary subject. After the first several interviews, I began turning the recorder on prior to entering the home so that initial interactions with the family could be captured on tape. At the conclusion of most interviews, while driving from the field site, I entered verbal notes and observations into the recorder. At times, emotional and physical exhaustion precluded immediate audiotaping of my comments, and in these cases field

notes were made a few hours later or the following day. This lessened the immediacy of my reflections, but it also made it possible to be more thoughtful. On a few occasions the interview was not audiotaped at all, in order to facilitate a more normal interaction with a subject and to avoid drawing the attention of others (e.g., given the somewhat complicated logistics of audiotaping in some settings, such as while playing with children in the park). In these cases, I took extensive written notes immediately following the interview. Written notes were made on telephone calls and saved in a computer or hard-copy file.

Interviewing and Observation

I took a self-conscious approach in which I considered myself, the researcher/interviewer, to be the primary instrument of data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Padgett, 1998). My personal ability to communicate was understood to affect the nature and quality of the interview data collected. This included my ability to ask sensitive yet probing questions and facilitate the fullest answers possible; to hear between the lines communication about parenting issues, a parent's relationship to me, or anything else; my capacity for empathy at any given moment; my basic understanding of the language used by subjects and the topics being addressed and my willingness to clarify when necessary; and my handling of the differences (and some similarities) between us. My capacity to closely observe the parent-child relationship and other dimensions of family life and to record in detail what I saw, felt, and thought about during that observation process would directly influence the nature of the data. My focus was also informed by both the literature and the ongoing process of analysis. The literature

The interviews, all of which were designed to be in-depth, were conducted using a combination of unstructured and semistructured approaches. The format varied based upon the topic of discussion and developing state of the subject's relationship with me, as well as any spontaneous circumstances that arose, necessitating a shift in approach. In general, as my relationship matured with families there was less need for structure in interviewing, but several parents seemed to develop expectations about my areas of interest in their lives and would often begin our meetings with information about the status of their welfare grant, their job, or their CPS case. Prior to embarking on data collection, general topic areas were identified for exploration based upon the literature and measures (standardized or unstandardized) used in prior research were consulted in the development of interview guides.

General interview topics are listed in Table 5. A timeline was developed for data collection and a plan for addressing these topics in this general order (e.g., welfare-to-work status, employment history, and making ends meet were assessed within the first three meetings). Topics were also intended to be addressed in an ongoing fashion. Monthly meetings tended to follow this general plan although often the conversation diverged, and many topics were revisited in subsequent interviews. Before each set of monthly interviews, an interview guide was developed using the literature where appropriate. Some of these guides were deliberately worded and offered a fair amount of structure (e.g., questions about managing your monthly budget, questions about
experiences of parenting) while others simply acted as a list of topic-related prompts.

Over the entire data collection period, regular meetings with members of the research team served as a means for examining the data collected up to that point, identifying gaps, focusing and reformulating the topics to be addressed in future interviews, as well as problem-solving ethical and practical dilemmas involving families.

### Table 5: Interview Themes

- Welfare-to-work status
- Knowledge of and feelings about welfare reform
- Sources of income
- Budgeting
- Job history
- Educational history
- Child welfare services history and status of current CWS involvement
- Experience of community, neighborhood safety, and quality
- Social support and extended family support
- Child care resources
- Housing issues
- Role of formal agency assistance, both concrete help and psychosocial
- Partner relationships
- State of the home environment, regarding safety, child-friendliness, availability of cognitively stimulating toys and materials
- Presence and nature of any daily routines for self and/or children
- Parents’ health and mental health
- The subjective experience of parenting in conditions of poverty
- Adult’s childhood experience of being parented and influence on current parenting style, capacity
- Observations of child-parent relationship quality
- Child well-being and developmental status
- Impact of race and class on perception and experience of opportunity (education and employment)
Interview Style

In general, my style of interviewing (whether semistructured or unstructured) was a minimalist one in that I tended to provide few direct observations, comments, or questions and tried to encourage people to continue through nonverbal means and with as little verbal intervention as I could sustain. This was intended to increase the likelihood that a subject's responses emerged as spontaneously as possible, with as little direction from me as possible. I did, however, ask direct questions and seek clarification where necessary and redirect conversations that were straying too far from relevance. Seldom did I ask people to explain why they did what they did; rather, I asked them to describe their experience, tell me what happened and how they thought and felt about it. This approach assumes there is a web of meaning lying somewhere in-between behavior, thoughts, and feelings, and that the reasons for actions (or inactions) are not always consciously accessible. It also assumes that not all accessible knowledge will be shared with a researcher (or anyone in particular), since even the most open informants have reasons to preciously guard their internal and relational life. Parenting, especially, is an arena of personal life about which many people are understandably sensitive and protective.

It proved difficult, initially, to observe the parent-child relationship in detail and to simultaneously interview the parent, although my ability to split my attention and make mental notes in this regard also improved. Efforts were made to compose verbal notes (into the tape recorder) immediately following the meeting, on descriptive factors such as how people appeared that day (dress, demeanor, hair, makeup); the state of the home
environment or neighborhood (particularly clean or messy, dangerous for some reason); specific descriptions of micro-interactions between the child and the parent (e.g., "he climbed in her lap requesting a bottle, and she did not look at him") as well as between myself and the parent (e.g., "she flipped the pages of the magazine while 'talking' to me, for the first 20 minutes") and myself and the child (e.g., "she immediately hugged me, which struck me as somewhat inappropriate since she had only met me once before, 2 months ago"). In these observations I tried to note affective tone, developmental progress of the child as reflected in the relationship or interaction, parental responsiveness to the child, and any factors that seemed potentially related to a cultural dimension of parenting or family life. I also made verbal and/or written notes about the logistics of the meeting (location, lateness, length), how I felt arriving or leaving the interview, how I simply felt being with the family or being in the environment, that particular day.

Time spent focused on children was unstructured and followed the lead of the child in play. These play sessions were geared toward a general assessment of child well-being (physical, motor, cognitive, language, and socioemotional development) through direct interaction with the child, information which supplemented other observations made of the child interacting with the caregiver, siblings, or other adults on other occasions. Some literature on child development assessment tools was consulted as a guide, although these observation periods were designed to obtain a broad-brush assessment and not at the level of detail that would be required for, say, a clinical assessment.
Raw Data

At the end of the data collection period, the raw data consisted of dozens of audiotapes and transcripts of in-person meetings; field notes made on the content and process of in-person meetings as well as telephone contacts; field notes made on the observation of parent-child relationships, the home environment, and reflection on our interactions; select documents or notes about the family (e.g., court reports); and written documents created to facilitate some of the interviews (e.g., source of income grids for understanding budgeting, timelines to gather welfare history, genograms to clarify extended family relationships). All audiotapes were transcribed, as verbatim as possible, into written documents. A professional transcription service was hired for this purpose. Ongoing communication with the transcribers proved helpful in clarifying the need for verbatim recording of interview content (e.g., including interactions with children and other individuals present, dogs barking and birds chirping loudly, noisy BART trains obscuring portions of the conversation).

Analyzing the Data

Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection period with a more formal and intensive level of analysis commencing after data collection was concluded. This process is summarized below.

- The early process of analysis included listening to audiotapes of prior interviews, making notes, and observations.
- Twice during the first year, case summaries or family profiles were written. This integrated the information gathered up to that point and ensured that people could be described in terms that, as much as possible, brought them alive to others. These served as background materials for discussion with the consultation team.
Excel spreadsheets were used as data matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994), a means of facilitating within- and cross-case comparisons along multiple variables or conceptual domains (e.g., comparing all subjects in terms of their welfare history, educational history, subjective experience of financial strain, and parenting stress). This helped to identify gaps in knowledge about a given family as well as to highlight the need for exploration of a new domain (e.g., children's developmental status, parental mental health; see Appendix for an example). Through this process, new questions were developed for exploration in the field.

Computer software designed specifically for the management of qualitative data, Atlas.ti, was used to manage the data and the analysis process. Transcribed, edited interviews and field notes were entered into the software package along with demographic data and case identifiers. In this way, large amounts of data from a variety of sources could be integrated and examined for conceptual regularities and irregularities; units of text could be coded as signifying certain ideas; and relationships between larger conceptual units could be identified and examined in a process of "constant comparison" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Each interview transcript was first reviewed while listening to the audiotape. Portions of transcript were then marked, or coded in one of two ways: (a) as a basic theme, category, or idea that was previously identified in the literature (e.g., welfare/CPS overlap, social support via extended family) or as a theme, topic or idea that was not anticipated and emerged in the data itself (e.g., a parent's particular feeling about themselves, their child, and their relationship with their child).

The dataset ultimately included 143 separate documents (including transcribed interviews and written notes) coded into over 4,800 narrative segments or quotations, with approximately 200 memos, 400 comments, and 400 quote segments that were hyperlinked together.

The coded data were then studied for similarities and idiosyncrasies across families, and over time (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As themes began to emerge, the data were examined for discrepant or disconfirming evidence (Padgett, 1998; Strauss & Corbin). In other words, there was a deliberate search for data that would contradict an emerging idea.

Analytic memos created during this process documented my reflections on the meaning of the data (Huberman & Miles, 1998; Padgett, 1998).

Conceptual patterns that emerged were then considered in light of the research questions and the data were studied further for their fit with the conceptual patterns—thus moving from an inductive to a more deductive approach and back again.
Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, reliability is understood to be "the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research," and "validity is the degree to which the finding is interpreted in a correct way" (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 20). This study makes no claim to absolute objectivity, although a number of steps have been taken to insure the reliability and validity of the results. These steps follow Padgett's (1998) six basic strategies for enhancing rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research.

1. Prolonged engagement with study subjects. The more time a researcher spends in the field, the more likely it is that subjects will be truthful with her/him. In this study, indeed, more frequent and lengthier interviews in many cases seemed to increase my sense that a subject was describing an experience honestly. Those who participated for a greater number of months, total, seemed to develop a more trusting relationship with me. But as noted earlier, the factual accuracy or truthfulness of no subject's narrative was presumed in this study. In fact, it was assumed that all subjects would disclose information selectively, to varying degrees (and all for understandable reasons), and that all verbal reports would need to be considered in light of other data sources in order to be interpreted (triangulation). Some subjects (Francesca, Leticia) seemed to readily tell stories about their lives, while others such as Janet remained somewhat guarded, and Maria was suspicious of my true identity and motives throughout the study. Although this limited my understanding of
Maria and Janet in certain ways, I chose to keep them in the study and try to understand the reasons for their self-protective behavior.

(2) **Triangulation.** The use of multiple theories, multiple methods, multiple data sources, or multiple observers tends to strengthen the set of observations about a topic. This study included triangulation by data source as well as some triangulation by theory (see also Denzin, 1978). Triangulation of data sources occurred through the use of in-depth, unstructured interviews, semistructured interviews that elicited different kinds of responses from families, observation of families' interactions, and researcher self-reflection. Each of these sources of data informed the other. Triangulation through theory (e.g., thinking about child protection and neglect through several alternative theoretical frameworks) also allowed for a more thorough, complex analysis.

(3) **The use of regular peer/advisor debriefing and support to guard against bias.** Potential sources of bias were examined in ongoing consultation during the data collection and analysis period. These included my previous professional and personal roles (e.g., as a child welfare worker) in relation to families like those in the study, roles that had the potential to influence my understanding of the families' experience. Discussions with the peer consultation team also included the topics of race and class differences between study subjects and myself and the occasional dilemma about whether to intervene on behalf of parents or children in some way (thereby becoming more of...
participant-observer, than an observer-participant, and affecting my interpretations).

(4) Member checking. This involves "returning periodically to the field to ensure that one is on the right track" (Padgett, 1998, p. 100). Some member checking was done near the conclusion of the data collection period, although many families could not be located or reached for follow-up interviews.

(5) Negative case analysis. This essentially refers to an effort to prove oneself wrong. For example, the assumption that most, if not all, child welfare-involved families would be banned by welfare reform proved to not be the case, per se. In this study, some appeared to be harmed, and others were less clearly or even positively affected by welfare reforms.

(6) Leaving an audit trail to enhance reproducibility. The analysis process was documented in detail and the coded data, with codes defined, are available in the Atlas.ti dataset.

(7) Finally, as a means of enhancing credibility, raw data are included in the findings (Drisko, 1997) in the form of narrations and augmentations. Narrations are derived directly from the comments of adult and child subjects in the study; augmentations involve observations of the researcher. The findings are written up including both of these. In addition, the decision to write in first-person is another step intended to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings: by including myself in the research frame and making explicit my relevant thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the moment, the reader is given the
opportunity both to place the data in context (Drisko), and to assess the believability of my observations. Where I have removed myself from the narrative, it is with the belief that the use of first person would offer little or nothing to the analysis.

**Ethical Issues**

The study was conducted under the approval of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Berkeley—approval that addressed in advance several key issues of informed consent and confidentiality. All parents were informed that I was a mandated reporter of suspected child maltreatment, and I discussed with them their concerns about my role. No child maltreatment reports were made in the course of the study.

**Ethical Dilemmas**

Many others have written about the ethical dilemmas inherent in the act of conducting research on, about, or with people who are socially marginalized (see for example, Waterston, 1999). One such issue that was encountered in this study included the question of remuneration (the financial compensation of subjects, for their time participating in interviews).

Although the original study design called for monthly interviews and thus the subjects would receive $25.00 per month, in reality the interviews occurred more sporadically for some subjects. For Francesca in particular, remuneration became a complicated issue. This was because of her extremely low cash income, her efforts to use the remuneration as a key supplement to her income, and the fact that her late entry into the study necessitated multiple interviews per month. Thus, Francesca was at times receiving a 10% increase in her monthly income because of her involvement in the study. While on the one hand, I wanted to help Francesca financially and felt that she, like all of the subjects, deserved to be paid for their time and contribution, I grew concerned when she began phoning me repeatedly requesting interviews, stating for example: "I really need the money; I haven't paid my rent." I addressed my concerns...
with her directly, expressing my worry that if she grew to rely on the remuneration too heavily, when the study soon concluded she could be left in a bind. Laying out the number of meetings we could plan on having (and thus the amount of remuneration she would receive), I offered to help her find ways of cutting costs in her budget since she was newly running a household. Subsequently we discussed her expensive phone bill and ways of potentially reducing it.

**TRANSFERRING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SKILLS TO CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE**

Many key principles, strategies, and techniques for doing good qualitative research can be transferred to child welfare practice. The discussion below focuses on skills used in data collection and data analysis, with a special emphasis on those intended to enhance reliability and validity.  

**An attitude of curiosity and positive skepticism.** A researcher's stance is an inherently curious one, interested in the unexpected, and in pursuit of evidence to support conclusions. This attitude is best cultivated and kept alive through the opportunity for self-reflection, support from others, and an environment that encourages ongoing learning. In the best of circumstances, child welfare work offers the same set of opportunities.

Informed consent is crucial to relationship building. Researchers are guided by an ethical (as well as legal) commitment to the protection of human subjects from physical or psychological harm. Informing potential study participants of any risks they face and

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6 It should be noted that there are many philosophical debates regarding the general approaches suggested here. For example, not all qualitative researchers agree that objectivity is either possible or desirable; or that theory should play a role in the early stages of certain research designs. These suggestions reflect one set of experiences and perspectives.

ensuring those risks are understood is one important aspect of conducting ethical research. Obtaining informed consent is the first step in forming a working relationship between researchers and participants. While the conditions and issues faced in child welfare work are certainly quite different from those in conducting research, the fundamental principles underlying informed consent—honesty and respect for human dignity and well-being—are worth emulating in child welfare practice. In addition, the effort to establish ongoing working relationships with clients and thereby prolong engagement will probably be best facilitated by attention to these principles.

**Conscious use of both research findings and theory.** It is recommended that researchers begin with a conscious, critical examination of the existing theory and research in their topic area and decide whether, and how, this literature informs their study. The same is true for child welfare practice. Ongoing knowledge of the state of the field in terms of research findings can and should be used to inform practice decisions. Knowledge of key theoretical perspectives in the field can also be used as road maps for decision-making.

**Practice careful observation and detailed description.** Qualitative research, as with child welfare social work, benefits from well-honed observational skills. Careful observation and translation of that information into written or verbal form is more difficult than it first appears. This is especially true in less controlled environments, such as during home visits. Locating your source of focus (e.g., "should I attend to the way the parent communicates about their life history, to the children's behavior, or to the state of the home environment?") takes time, particularly when the answer is "attend to everything."

Additionally, the demands of being both an intervenor and an observer can often compete. If it is not possible to record your observations in the moment, build in time to take notes as soon after the interaction, as possible. Recall can diminish quickly. The usefulness of written, detailed notes about what was observed cannot be underestimated (e.g., "Regina said to her daughter, who was starting to fold the laundry, "no, no wait, I can do it. I know how." This was said in a grating, irritated tone of voice."). Training yourself to do this, even though it is often difficult, can save time and energy later and improve the quality of assessments. Leaving an audit trail of these details for yourself and others makes it possible to later recall the circumstances that led to case decisions and evaluate those decisions.

**Listening and understanding what is communicated.** A qualitative researcher will remain open to multiple possibilities inherent in the words and modes of expression that people use. The meaning of people’s communications (e.g., "I would strangle my child before allowing her father to take her from me") may depend in subtle but important ways on the cultural, socioeconomic, and relational context.

**Data gathering and analysis as distinct but overlapping processes.** In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are conceptually distinct but mutually informing processes. The researcher collects data (e.g., enters the field, visits with a family in the local Burger King, and takes notes), and then upon leaving the field begins one stage of analysis (e.g., reading and editing the notes, adding reflective comments in the margins). The analysis often points out the need for additional data collection. The same set of processes can be mirrored in child welfare social work.

Distinguishing between observation and inference. Whether recording narrative (what people say) or behavior (what people do), there can be easy slippage between what appeared to happen, and what it might mean. Separating out observation from interpretation can strengthen the validity of your conclusions and your credibility with both clients and other professionals. Consider, for example, the qualitative differences between the following two statements:

(a) Anna admits she was an unfit mother during her period of drug addiction, unsure whether she wanted more children. After having her most recent child, however, she has changed and no longer craves alcohol or drugs, so is unlikely to relapse.

(b) Anna described herself as an "unfit mother" during her period of drug addiction, acknowledging that she was unsure about wanting another child, when she learned of her most recent pregnancy. She said, "I wanted a baby, but then I didn't. Only reason I really wanted them because I like how they feel inside [pointing to her belly, as if to say pregnant]...I hated to have 'em and I knew it would have been hard on me, but I managed....Going through the labor...staying up with them at night when they cry, you know. I like to sleep." Today, she views herself as "changed" as a result of her recovery, and denies that she is likely to encounter any difficulties maintaining her sobriety. "I don' have the cravings for alcohol or drugs anymore. I...feel real good." While Anna seems to be functioning well at
present, she does not have a clear plan for staying sober. This may present no problems at all, but it may also indicate some susceptibility to relapse.

**Awareness of one's own influence on the situation (reactivity).** Qualitative researchers, particularly those doing ethnographies, are conscious of the impact of their presence on the events that unfold. When researchers take a stance that involves less participation, they may reduce reactivity, but their presence nonetheless affects the data they are gathering. Child welfare workers face similar issues when gathering information for assessments and writing court reports. For example, workers are often confronted with angry clients, especially in cases where children have been removed. Empathy with parents is a first step (e.g., understanding why many parents' first response to the situation might be anger), and secondly it is important to consider one's own role in further provoking a parent's reaction. Third, the experience of relating to a client can be used as a source of information. A child welfare worker, just as a researcher, might ask herself: How does the parent relate to me? What is it like to be in the family's presence, in their home? Although the answers to these questions are not definitive, they offer potentially useful information that can help in understanding people. Reflecting on one's own emotional reactions as a child welfare worker can provide some clues about the nature of the parent's relational world. Finally, workers need to be attuned to the emotional impact of child welfare interventions on parents and their responses to the intervention itself. The way a child's removal is handled by the worker, for example, may have an important effect upon the parent's capacity to respond and follow through with their case plan.
Multiple causation is likely, and causation is very difficult to determine. In the effort to understand what caused a parent to neglect or abuse his or her child, beware of the temptation of a simple analysis. Any set of human behaviors, including parenting and parents’ relationships with their children, are complex processes. There are likely to be multiple influences on any particular event, and it will probably be impossible to determine causation with absolute certainty. Yet an effort toward comprehensive and targeted data collection (asking more of the right questions) can increase the understanding of the roots of the problem. In addition, your understanding will be improved through triangulation of data sources, observers, methods for assessing a situation, and theories through which a problem is understood.

Good qualitative analysis strives toward objectivity, but acknowledges and examines its own subjectivity. Reports, whether written by researchers or practitioners, often appear as if there were no specific author (e.g., "An assessment was conducted and Maria was found to be deficient in the following areas..."). While this may be a standard professional practice, the implications are worth considering. This practice has the effect of placing psychological distance between the professional (you) and the client, perhaps making it easier to present a critical assessment. It may also reduce your sense of accountability for that assessment, and the report may be perceived as impersonal, by the client. Shifting to a report-writing method that includes you, the author, as an active participant in the assessment may necessitate a shift in style, one that promotes thoughtfulness, accountability, and better working relationships with families.

Use of team consultation and peer supervision. Clarity about what is going on in a family requires time to reflect and consider different possibilities. The involvement of peers and advisors in that reflective process is crucial, because others can point out blind spots and question your assumptions and interpretations in important ways. It is also necessary to have peer support around the challenges of child welfare work, just as with qualitative research. Neither should be done in isolation.

GROUP ACTIVITY: QUALITATIVE METHODS

Divide students into groups of three. Obtain several audiocassette recorders. This exercise may be conducted over a series of class sessions, since it involves three separate 30-minute exercises plus discussion.

For 10 minutes, the first student interviews the second student about his or her economic history (e.g., family of origin socioeconomic status; current socioeconomic circumstances; and aspirations for themselves and their children, if they have any children). During this first interview, the third student should observe without intervening and take notes. The interviewer should not write anything down. After the interview is concluded, both the interviewee and the interviewer should take a 10-minute break, and then take notes on what they observed, for 10 minutes.

During the second interview, the interviewer will again ask the interviewee about his or her economic history as described above, but the students should change roles. This time, the observer should take no notes but is allowed to interject and participate in the interview. The interviewer, in this case, is allowed a pad of paper and a pen, to use as he or she wishes. After a 10-minute break, the observer-participant and the interviewee should take notes on what they observed, for a total of 10 minutes.

During the third interview, the interviewer will again ask the interviewee about his or her economic history as described above, but the students should again switch roles. This time, the observer, but not the interviewer, should take notes. The interview should be tape-recorded. When the interview is completed, the group should transcribe (verbatim) the tape. [This will take more than 10 minutes].

Within the small groups, discuss the pros and cons of each approach, using the following questions to guide discussion. Each group should then present their comments to the entire class.

- What were the differences between the kinds of observations made by individual observers? Did there seem to be personal preferences in the choice of focus or the way observations were framed?

- To what extent did the observations focus on content, versus the interviewee's apparent emotional state, nonverbal behaviors, facial expressions, and the like?

- Did the observations include notes on the interviewee's apparent way of relating to the interviewer? Whether the answer is yes or no, what do you think are the reasons for this? When the observer became an observer-participant, how did this affect the nature of the interview? How did it affect the kind of data that were obtained?

- How did the student's role (interviewer, observer) influence the notes he or she took?

- After the third interview, compare the transcript with the notes of the observer, and the recollections of the interviewer and interviewee. What does this comparison suggest about the validity of each data source?

- Examine the notes and determine when they appear to be observations and when they are actually interpretations. When interpretations are identified, discuss them with the interviewee. Does the interviewee agree with the interpretation? Why or why not? If you needed to write a summary or report of the interview, how would you incorporate the views of the interviewee along with your own interpretation?
REFERENCES


Danziger et al. (2000). [Complete reference not available].


Kirk & Miller. (1986). [Complete reference not available.]


Miles & Huberman. (1994). [Complete reference not available.]


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APPENDIXES
### EMPIRICAL REPORTS ON WELFARE AND CHILD WELFARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Data source/Method</th>
<th>Outcomes measured</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geen, Fender, Leos-Ürbel (2001)</td>
<td>Assess effects of state programs on CWS caseloads</td>
<td>State-level</td>
<td>• In-depth case studies in 12 states, multiple local sites&lt;br&gt;• Interviews w/CW stakeholders&lt;br&gt;• Focus groups with workers&lt;br&gt;• State-level child welfare caseload data</td>
<td>• Agency interactions&lt;br&gt;• Changes in staffing, staff responsibility&lt;br&gt;• Resources available since WR&lt;br&gt;• Changes in service policies &amp; practices&lt;br&gt;• Changes in #, type of families in CWS</td>
<td>• Features of TANF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romero, Chavkin, &amp; Wise (2000)</td>
<td>Assess effects of state program features on CWS</td>
<td>State-level</td>
<td>• Survey of 50 state CWS administrators (conducted 1998-99 re: previous year’s caseload)</td>
<td>• CPS caseloads&lt;br&gt;• Referrals to CPS&lt;br&gt;• Interaction between agencies&lt;br&gt;• Select special concerns: child care, child support, teen mother options, evaluation or monitoring</td>
<td>• Features of TANF&lt;br&gt;• Role of sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDHHS/ASPE 2000)</td>
<td>Establish baseline figures for AFDC, Medicaid, &amp; Foster Care pre-TANF</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>• Administrative data in CA, IL, NC&lt;br&gt;• AFDC entry cohort 1995-96, followed thru end of 1996</td>
<td>• Changing transition rates between these three programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needell, Cuccaro-Alamin, Brookhart, &amp; Lee (1999)</td>
<td>Describe pre-TANF transition rates from welfare to CWS and describe characteristics of AFDC families at risk of CWS involvement</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>• Admin data on AFDC entries from 10 CA counties over 5 years (1990-95)&lt;br&gt;• N = 63,768 AFDC recipient’s children pre-TANF (linked AFDC, maltreatment, FC, and birth records)</td>
<td>• CWS involvement at level of reports, investigations, case openings, and foster placements</td>
<td>• Child age, gender, race, &amp; birth order&lt;br&gt;• Family configuration&lt;br&gt;• Mother’s age, education, &amp; country of origin (native or foreign born)&lt;br&gt;• Birth/prenatal characteristics: timing of prenatal care, prematurity, child birth weight, birth abnormality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paxson &amp; Waldfogel (1999a)</td>
<td>Examine impact of socioeconomic circumstances on incidence of maltreatment</td>
<td>State-level, aggregate</td>
<td>• 1990-96 NCCAN data, current population survey (CPS) 1990-96</td>
<td>• Reports of maltreatment (indicated/substantiated reports)&lt;br&gt;• # children physically abused&lt;br&gt;• # children neglected</td>
<td>• Socioeconomic income&lt;br&gt;• Household composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paxson &amp; Waldfogel (1999b)</td>
<td>Estimate effects of socioeconomic factors on maltreatment</td>
<td>State-level, aggregate (panel data)</td>
<td>• 1990-96 NCCAN data, AHA data, Uniform Crime reports, current pop survey</td>
<td>• Reports of maltreatment&lt;br&gt;• Substantiated reports of maltreatment</td>
<td>• Socioeconomic status&lt;br&gt;• Family structure&lt;br&gt;• Employment status&lt;br&gt;• State-level info on drug arrests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courtney, Piliavin, &amp; Power (2001)</td>
<td>Examine level of child welfare involvement among TANF applicants and predictors of CWS involvement before &amp; after TANF application</td>
<td>Case-level Exploratory</td>
<td>Survey data (n = 1,179) of Milwaukee TANF applicants (1999)</td>
<td>Investigated reports of abuse or neglect June 1989 – September 2000</td>
<td>TANF application date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shook (1998)</td>
<td>Establish baseline rates of CW involvement among AFDC population and identify AFDC children most at risk of CWS</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>1990-95, pre-TANF Administrative Data</td>
<td>Child welfare case opening—intact family</td>
<td>Sanction status</td>
<td>Demographic characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shook (1999)</td>
<td>Test whether income loss associated with welfare grant reduction is associated w/CWS risk and if relationship is moderated by other variables</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>Administrative Data</td>
<td>Maltreatment report</td>
<td>Welfare income, Income level, Disruptive life events, Environmental hardships, Demographics, Other child welfare risk factors (e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fein &amp; Lee (2000)</td>
<td>Assess effects of state (DE) welfare program on maltreatment</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>Experimental design w/ 3-year follow-up</td>
<td>Alleged abuse &amp; neglect</td>
<td>Comprehensive, tightly enforced reforms in state ABC program, Comparison group originally under AFDC rules (during first 1½ years of study)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells &amp; Guo (in press)</td>
<td>Pre-welfare analysis of relationships between welfare and workfare &amp; FR</td>
<td>Case-level</td>
<td>Administrative Data</td>
<td>Speed of reunification</td>
<td>Mother’s income from welfare and work, Child characteristics, Placement characteristics, Maternal problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ESTIMATING FOOD STAMP AMOUNTS

To calculate food stamp benefits (allotments), first calculate the net monthly income for a household (using a formula that includes several types of deductions). Then, multiply the net monthly income of the household by .3, and subtract the result from the maximum allotment for the household size (listed below). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this formula is based in the expectation that households spend about 30% of their resources on food (USDA, FNS, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross income computation</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Profile 1</th>
<th>Profile 2</th>
<th>Profile 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine household size…</td>
<td>4 people with no elderly or disabled members</td>
<td>3 people with no elderly or disabled members</td>
<td>3 people with no elderly or disabled members</td>
<td>3 people with no elderly or disabled members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add gross monthly income…</td>
<td>$800 earned income + $214 social security = $1,014 gross income</td>
<td>$880 earned income + $317.50 TANF = $1,197.50</td>
<td>$645 TANF</td>
<td>$520 TANF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If gross monthly income is less than the limit for household size, determine net income</td>
<td>$1,014 is less than the $1,848 allowed for a 4-person household, so determine net income</td>
<td>$1,197.50 &lt; $1,533 for a 3-person household</td>
<td>$645 &lt; $1,533 for a 3-person household</td>
<td>$520 &lt; $1,533 for a 3-person household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract deductions to determine net income and apply the net income test</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract 20% earned income deduction</td>
<td>$1,014 gross income, $800 earned income x .20 = $160</td>
<td>$880 x .20 = $176</td>
<td>$645</td>
<td>$520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,014 - $160 = $854</td>
<td>$1,197.50 - $176 = $1,021.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract standard deduction</td>
<td>$854 - $134 = $720</td>
<td>$1,021.50 - $134 = $887.50</td>
<td>$645 - $134 = $511</td>
<td>$520 - $134 = $386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract dependent care deduction, but not more than limit</td>
<td>$720 - $116 = $604</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract child support deduction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtract medical costs over $35 for elderly, disabled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross income computation</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Profile 1</th>
<th>Profile 2</th>
<th>Profile 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excess shelter deduction</td>
<td>Determine half of adjusted income</td>
<td>$604 adjusted income/2 = $302 (half of income) = $48 Excess shelter cost</td>
<td>$887.50/2 = $443.75, which is greater than $180 total shelter cost</td>
<td>$511 adjusted income/2 = $255.50, which is greater than $180 total shelter cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$604 - $48 = $556 net monthly income</td>
<td>$887.50 net monthly income</td>
<td>$511 net monthly income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply the net income test</td>
<td>Since the net monthly income is less than $1,421 for a household of 4, the household meets the income test.</td>
<td>Since the net monthly income is less than $1,180 for a household of 3, the household meets the income test.</td>
<td>Since the net monthly income is less than $1,180 for a household of 3, the household meets the income test.</td>
<td>Since the net monthly income is less than $1,180 for a household of 3, the household meets the income test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiply the net monthly income by .3, (rounding up) then subtract from the maximum allotment for household size using table on following page</td>
<td>$556 net monthly income x .3 = $166.80 (round up to $167)</td>
<td>$888 x .3 = $266.4</td>
<td>$511 x .3 = $153.3</td>
<td>$386 x .3 = $115.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$434 (maximum allotment for 4) - $167 (30% of net income) = $267 Food Stamp Allotment for full month</td>
<td>$341 (maximum allotment for 3) - $266.40 = $76.40 Food Stamp Allotment for full month</td>
<td>$341 (maximum allotment for 3) - $153.3 = $187.70 Food Stamp Allotment for full month</td>
<td>$341 (maximum allotment for 3) - $115.8 = $225.20 Food Stamp Allotment for full month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOOD STAMP ALLOTMENT CHART AND ESTIMATED BENEFITS
UPDATED OCTOBER 2000
EFFECTIVE THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People in household</th>
<th>Maximum monthly allotment $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each add’l person</td>
<td>+98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA. Shaded columns taken directly from website; calculations to estimate food stamps for three profiles are added by the authors.