

SHOULD THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BE REFORMED?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a study of the General Assistance program in the State of Michigan. It examines the effects of the Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training (MOST) program on General Assistance recipients. It also looks at various welfare reforms and their effects on General Assistance recipients using case examples. It offers an opinion on whether General Assistance is effective in doing what it was originally intended to do.

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SHOULD THE GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BE REFORMED?

Introduction

Almost everyone has a view on welfare reform. Those views can be radical, conservative or mixed. In order to discuss the current issues on welfare reform, it is necessary to look at the history of the welfare system, why it was formed, and if it is doing what it was intended to do.

Specifically, this paper attempts to assess the General Assistance (GA) program. The General Assistance Program provides economic relief for those individuals who fail to qualify for Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This paper attempts to determine whether General Assistance merely provides temporary relief from poverty, or if it becomes a permanent way of life. Poverty is defined as the lack of enough income and resources to live adequately by community standards. The poverty level for a family of four, for example, was \$11,200 in 1987, based on the income that households need to eat adequately without spending more than a¹ third of their income on food.

¹
Social Security Bulletin, April 1987, p. 64.

The U.S. government classifies about 14 percent of the population as below poverty level.² In order to satisfy the taxpayers, attempts are made to remove people from the welfare rolls. In Michigan, the Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training Program (MOST), is an attempt to provide supportive services to aid in the education, training and employment of the poor to help them off public assistance. This paper looks at the effects of the MOST program on the GA program.

This paper asks the question "Is GA still doing what it was originally intended to do?" It attempts to answer the more specific questions, "Should General Assistance be reformed, and if so, how?" and "What effects can MOST have on said program?" In order to answer these questions, this study examines various newspaper and journal articles, books and reports on welfare, welfare reform and General Assistance.

This paper in no way intends to imply that too much money is spent on social services. Social services are but very small slices in a large budgetary pie. This paper is more concerned with the long-term effect of General Assistance on its recipients, and the role of the MOST program in counteracting any negative effects.

²

Ibid.

The Literature

HISTORY OF WELFARE

Our welfare system as we know it originates from the Elizabethan Poor Law. That law was passed to feed the poor, including widows, children, the blind and crippled. The Great Depression led to an expansion of the welfare system.³

In Michigan, the State Welfare Department began in 1871 when Act 192 of the Public Acts of 1871 created the Board of the State Commissioners for the General Supervision of Charitable, Penal, Pauper and Reformatory Institution. In 1879 it became the State Board of Corrections and Charities, and in 1921 the State Welfare Department.⁴

The Michigan Department of Social Services is a result of the Social Welfare Act (Act 280 of 1939 revised and supplemented by Act 131 of 1982) and a number of other state statutes. A number of state and federal laws govern the programs and services of the Department which is limited and funded by state and

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Bruno Stein, On Relief: The Economics of Poverty and Public Welfare, (New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 3-4.

4

Michigan Department of Social Services, 1987 and 1988 Biennial Report, Jan. 1988, p. 60.

federal rules and regulations.

According to the Social Welfare Act, in Michigan the Department of Social Services is mandated

...to protect the welfare of the people of this state; to provide general relief, hospitalization, infirmary and medical care to poor or unfortunate persons; to provide for compliance by this state with the provisions of the social security act; to provide protection, welfare and services to aged persons, dependent children, the blind, and the permanently disabled; to administer programs and services for the prevention and treatment of delinquency, dependency and neglect of children... 6

The need for welfare reached crisis levels during the Great Depression. Political unrest led the government to provide welfare to the destitute. Although poverty was evident, the factor that caused the government to respond was the violence that threatened the country's stability, rather than poverty itself. 7

It was felt that no one could remain on welfare indefinitely without an adverse affect on his character. President Franklin Roosevelt believed that society would suffer if its members were allowed to continue receiving

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Michigan Department of Social Services, Myths and Facts About Welfare in Michigan, Dec. 1982, p. 1.

6

Ibid.

7

Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare, (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 76-77.

welfare. He believed in the early concept of workfare, requiring the employable to work for their check, receiving a security wage of about \$50 a month less than prevailing wage rates for skilled labor, but twice the amount they would receive on welfare alone. This was to be handled by the state and local governments.

WRITINGS ON WELFARE REFORM

Various states offered general assistance programs prior to the New Deal as a source of support to families. Although welfare was developed as a temporary helping hand, some people feel that it has become a way of life for far too many.

To those who work for a living, the welfare recipient seems to enjoy a free ride at their expense, with no desire to work. They are greatly offended by the welfare recipients' demands for greater benefits.

8
James T. Patterson, America's Struggle Against Poverty 1900-1980. (Cambridge, Mass.:Howard University Press, 1981), p. 45.

9
Paul E. Patterson and Mark C. Rom. "The Case for a National Welfare Standard," The Brookings Review, Winter, 1988, p. 25.

10
Stein, On Relief, p. 191.

11
Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, The Politics of Turmoil:Poverty and the Urban Crisis. (New York:Basic Books, 1975), pp. 23-24.

It has long been felt that the welfare system is being manipulated and abused by cheaters and frauds and that the people who are paying are the taxpayers and the truly needy.¹²

Some conservatives feel that welfare should only exist for those who are unable to help themselves. All others should be forced to work. Guaranteed income programs discourage work and welfare fraud calls for get-tough reponses. To these conservatives, the bottom line is to cut costs and to reduce welfare dependency.¹³

For those who are neither truly needy nor the deserving poor, the situation goes beyond economic considerations and into social, political and moral questions. Those who advocate maintenance or expansion of public welfare feel that it is necessary for a strong nation and the well-being of society. Opponents feel that it destroys initiative and leads to dependence, irresponsibility, laziness, and other undesirable attitudes. It is argued that equal opportunity and economic security do more to reduce social tensions and

¹²

Patterson, America's Struggle, p. 173.

¹³

Ibid., p. 206.

hostility among the lower class.

Power lies in the hands of the nonpoor. They have a fear of the poor who may engage in antisocial behavior like crime or rioting. They may also feel that the present degree of poverty is needed for their psychological well-being for how can they be well off if there is no one who is worse off. The nonpoor rely on the poor for comparison.

Poverty is greatly affected by capitalism. Capitalism is characterized by change and fluctuation in employment. The constant change in labor requirements leaves someone employed at all times. Society depends on stable employment situations or some alternative in order to control social behavior. Welfare serves as an alternative in the case of high unemployment.

It is normal for capitalism to continuously discard unneeded labor. Modern technology and work reorganization as a result of competition lead to decreases in labor needed to produce goods and services.

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Robert J. Lampman, Social Welfare Spending: Accounting for Changes From 1950-1978, (Orlando, FL:Academic Press, 1984), p. 9.

15

Stein, On Relief, pp. 189-190.

16

Cloward and Fiver, Regulating the Poor, pp. 5-7.

Capitalism also tends to lead to overproduction, and unless new areas of economic activity are found to use the extra production, recession, depression, and unemployment result.¹⁷

Because of this pattern, unemployment has become one of the most serious problems of capitalism, and the move of corporations overseas, and the small business failures here increase the problem even more. In the 1960s, the nation was considered to be at full employment with a 3 percent unemployment rate. Today, 6 percent is considered full employment. Unemployment ranged between 6 and 12 percent in the 1980s.¹⁸ It is generally accepted that we will always have unemployment, and thus we will always have welfare.

According to economists, full employment threatens profitability in corporations through the necessary increase in wages. Because of the political power of large corporations, the government sets policies that favor big business and capitalism as opposed to the poor

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Edward S. Greenberg, The American Political System, (Glenview, IL:Scott, Foresman and Co., pp. 325-326.

18

Ibid., pp. 326-327.

and powerless. Public bureaucracies do whatever is necessary to maintain their stability and expansion. They form and distribute benefits so that clients do not form powerful groups that may lead to collective action. This keeps the power of the poor to a minimum when it comes to influencing the electoral system.

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The government is able to exert considerable control over the poor because of the discretion used in distributing benefits. Laws governing the distribution of benefits are vague, and administrative procedures are complex and unclear.

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Welfare recipients do not have the power that is usually inherent in membership in other groups. Because of the stigma attached to being on welfare, they are less likely to form collectively and risk being labeled failures. They allow themselves to become satisfied with their benefits, and go on unorganized and ignored.

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Our present welfare system monitors the behavior of its recipients to the extent that they become a dependent, controlled population and the cost to

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Cloward and Piven, Politics of Turmoil, p. 15.

20

Ibid., p. 23.

21

Ibid., p. 17.

government is relatively minimal. It is certainly less expensive than a system of coercion and permanent control. The present welfare system serves the needs of corporate capitalism fairly well, and as a result, it is likely to be around for a long time to come.²²

Welfare is a necessary economic arrangement. Its major function is to regulate labor and restore order when the threat of outbreak occurs from high unemployment rates. Welfare also regulates labor when workers are needed in the labor force.²³

People remain on welfare for many reasons. Some lack the motivation needed to look for work. Some have been laid off from better paying manufacturing jobs and will accept nothing less. Others are affected by the increase in part-time and temporary work, or in the wage rate and other economic trends that have increased the number of working poor by 50 percent over the past decade.²⁴

The mission of the Michigan Department of Social

²² Greenberg, The American Political System, p. 330.

²³ Cloward and Piven, Regulating the Poor, p. 3.

²⁴ Mimi Abramovitz, "Why Welfare Reform is a Sham," The Nation, Sept. 26, 1988, p. 239.

Services includes protecting the welfare of its citizens and helping to meet the financial, social and medical needs of those unable to do so. ²⁵ But there is some disagreement over how much burden the taxpayer should bear. ²⁶ Most Americans oppose the expansion of welfare. Since 1976, there has been strong political reaction against further rapid increase in welfare spending and taxpayers have voiced their opposition to high state and local taxes, many of which go toward welfare. ²⁷

Many taxpayers believe that welfare discourages its recipients from working. Since most taxpayers work for a living they expect a return for their money, and although they accept that there is a need to provide for those who are truly needy, they resent supporting those who choose to loaf. ²⁸

The taxpayer is concerned with his personal welfare or savings, and in his eyes, public assistance does not make him better off. He feels that his tax dollars are

²⁵
Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 52.

²⁶
"Treat the Causes, Not the Symptoms," The New York Times, 17 July 1988, sec. 3, p. 2.

²⁷
Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 9.

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Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 52.

²⁶
"Treat the Causes, Not the Symptoms," The New York Times, 17 July 1988, sec. 3, p. 2.

²⁷
Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 9.

²⁸
Stein, On Relief, p. 25.

29

being wasted.

There are those who refuse to look for work, even when there are many opportunities available and training is provided. Most people agree that it is not fair to those who willingly work, or to all taxpayers, that some should be idle when employment is available. Many argue that welfare recipients should be required to accept training opportunities and jobs when they are offered or lose their benefits permanently. Most feel that no able bodied person should enjoy a free ride when training and work are available. Others feel that by discouraging work and saving, welfare imposes social costs.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

General Assistance is one of the four categories of financial assistance offered by the government. The others are Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Social Security. General Assistance (GA) roughly defined, is financial assistance provided to needy persons who do not qualify

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Ibid., pp. 4-5.

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Theodore R. Marmor, ed. Poverty Policy: A Compendium of Cash Transfer Proposals, Chicago: Aldine Atherton, Inc., 1971), p. 83.

31

Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 42.

for any of the assistance programs with federal matching
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 funds.

In 1978, 1.5 billion dollars in cash benefits were
 spent on 800,000 General Assistance recipients in the
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 U.S. In the eyes of the taxpayers, and often in the
 eyes of the recipients, the system does not seem to be
 functioning well. Intense dissatisfaction has led to a
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 search for alternatives.

Because the federal government provides no matching
 funds for GA, some states do not offer it, and others
 offer only a bare minimum. Some states offer it to
 certain populations, such as those who are disabled and
 waiting for their SSI applications to be processed, or
 are somewhat disabled, or due to some emergency
 situation have some special or temporary need. In some
 cases General Assistance is available on a one time
 basis only. Because of the different requirements, GA
 35
 expenditures vary greatly from state to state.

There are entire areas of the country where there is

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Ralph D. Ellis, "General Assistance Payments
 and Crime Rates in the United States," Policy
 Studies Review, Winter 1987, p. 292.

33

Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 42.

34

Stein, On Relief, p. 3.

35

Ellis, "General Assistance Payments," Policy
 Studies Review, p. 292.

practically no GA at all, and others where the amounts are minimal. Each state sets its eligibility requirements, amounts of payments and method of administering payments. These all vary widely between states, and sometimes within states.

Michigan has no such restrictions. Any adult who is not employed or receiving any other income is eligible for GA. Also there are no restrictions on the length or number of times a person may receive GA. In theory, everyone must register for work and participate in the Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training (MOST) program. This is the state's idea of welfare reform, but in reality, not everyone is forced to comply.

Michigan may be considered a generous GA state. In 1988, a total of 131,044 GA recipients in Michigan received a total of \$284,487,548 in benefits. Michigan had the fifth highest General Assistance expenditures in 1986.

Recently, two studies were done using data

36

Ibid.

37

Social Security Bulletin, June 1988/Vol. 51, No. 6.

38

Social Security Bulletin, Annual Statistical Supplement, 1988.

collected since 1970. Both studies concluded that welfare recipients are more likely to live in states with higher welfare benefits. Apparently, the more a state did for its poor, the more poor people it had living there over a five-year period. These studies indicate that when deciding where to live, poor people take welfare policies into consideration.³⁹

While many states offer generous GA payments, GA is still a less than preferred way of life. So why do so many people remain on it? There are a number of opinions offered on that question.

One answer is lack of education. A limited education can prevent a person from seeking many avenues. For many of the uneducated, reading want ads, answering the ads, filling out applications can all become obstacles to overcome. It may be difficult for those who are self-conscious about their poor grammar, or their difficulty understanding big words. They may fear complicated questions or detailed forms.⁴⁰ Often the uneducated will reject a job offer for fear of

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Theodore R. Marmor, ed. Poverty Policy: A Compendium of Cash Transfer Proposals, (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, Inc., 1971), p. 16.

40

Ibid.

getting in over their heads.

It is the belief of the government that funding education adds to the quality of life for present and future generations. Education is an investment in the human resources of our country.⁴² But our system is failing to educate many of its students and too many of those failures turn to General Assistance. Lack of education and failure in the work world go hand in hand.⁴³

About half of America's adults have trouble reading or writing. This means unfulfilled human potential is wasted. In order to be productive, we need a literate work force. Statistics show that illiteracy tends to be concentrated in the unemployed, incarcerated and juvenile offenders. In order to enhance economic growth and reduce welfare dependency, the problem of illiteracy must be tackled.⁴⁴

Another problem is lack of skills. Many young, able-bodied GA recipients have the potential for full employment, but without skills, work history or

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Ibid.

42

Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 78.

43

Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Social Services, BEST:Building Employment Skills Today.

44

Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 29.

education, they have a tougher time finding employment. There is stiff competition for jobs, and any deficiency in basic skills, difficulty reading, writing or communicating, makes finding a job even tougher.⁴⁵

Some people are psychologically unable to work. They have been on welfare for so long that they accept it as inevitable, and don't seek any other options. They blame their problems on the government. On the one hand the government provides billions of dollars to create programs that will motivate participants not to accept the billions that the government on the other hand is giving them in welfare. The problem will never be solved this way.⁴⁶

There have been studies done that show that many people believe that welfare recipients are lazy and dishonest. Welfare recipients are viewed as cunning. There is some evidence of people who thrive on welfare and tend to skillfully avoid work. They are known as the "super-scroungers." They believe that they should enjoy the good life, avoiding work and living off the

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C. Patrick Babcock, Letter to Community Leaders, 14 Feb. 1989.

46

New Attitudes--and Maybe Jobs--for Welfare Recipients," The Philadelphia Inquirer, 23 June 1986, sec. D, p. 2.

47

welfare system.

From its beginnings, welfare has had its share of individuals with the "gimme" syndrome. These individuals felt that the government owed them welfare. A welfare recipient living in an urban area says, "I think the welfare department is too soft, too lenient. They don't make investigations to see how the welfare money is being spent. If the workers went to the houses more often, they would be able to tell if people are cheating."

For these reasons, people accuse the welfare system of laxness, excessive generosity, inefficiency, and vulnerability to exploitation. Indeed, previous attempts at welfare reform have been met with only moderate, if any, success.

Almost every state has a welfare work/training program. Utah has WEAT (Work Experience and Training); California has GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence); Wisconsin has BEST (Building Employment Skills Today); and Michigan has MOST (Michigan Opportunity and Skills

47

Adrian Funnham and Maria Rose, "Alternative Ethics: The Relationship Between the Wealth, Work and Leisure Ethic," Human Relations, vol. 40, no. 9, 1987, p. 563.

48

Cloward and Piven, Regulating the Poor, p. 81.

49

Ibid., p. 172.

50

Funnham and Rose, Alternative Ethics, p. 563.

Training). But unfortunately, more time may have gone into developing these cute little catch names, than into studying what might actually work for the poor.

It is a common assumption that the best way to overhaul the welfare system is to require and help clients to get training and jobs.⁵¹ We have learned through the many failings of government training programs that they know very little about training, motivation or even gathering labor market information that is relevant to available jobs. Pressed for funds, welfare departments have sent recipients to training programs that would satisfy requirements at the lowest possible costs, but that have failed to benefit the recipient.⁵²

Programs that train people for jobs that aren't available only create further frustration in an individual with little hope or self-confidence. If recipients need education, then that is what they should be provided. There is no point in pouring money into useless training programs.⁵³

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"Some Preliminary Results in the Rush From Welfare to Work," The New York Times, 21 Aug. 1988, sec. 4, p. 5.

52

Stein, On Relief, pp. 33-34.

53

Ibid., p. 139.

If a policy is designed to increase the employment rate of welfare recipients, it must include efforts to locate jobs as well as reduce the costs of employment. Welfare departments in the various states naturally report that their programs are successful; no state wants to be left out of the success stories, but figures can be made to look good.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, welfare departments have not been successful at job development or even close coordination with state employment services. They have the poorest prospects to work with⁵⁵ and their resources are often limited.

Many of the welfare recipients who are involved in training programs have no hope of finding employment. These include ex-convicts, the mentally ill and the substance abusers. There is little to be gained from training these people if there is no one willing to hire⁵⁶ them.

In passing legislation related to welfare and work, Congress needs to understand the nature of the workplace and its changing needs. In requiring people to work,

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"Some Preliminary Results," The New York Times.

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Stein, On Relief, p. 33.

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Martin Rein, Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change, (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1970), p. 86.

efforts must be made to prepare them for long-term
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 employment. The most successful jurisdictions have been
 those who supplement low wages with employment related
 expense items such as transportation, clothing, and
 other costs of being employed that are often taken for
 granted unless you are just barely breaking even. 58

Another consideration in welfare reform is
 understanding why recipients don't show up for work
 assignments. In New York City, 50,000 people are called
 in each year and offered a choice of programs, but at
 most stages of the process, one-third of those called in
 do not show up and are threatened with at least a cut in
 their benefits. In 1986, New York City asked the State
 Legislature to give them permission to set up an
 experiment that would require every able-bodied welfare
 recipient to participate in an intensive program. For
 those who get jobs or complete employment or training
 programs there would be cash bonuses. Those who fail to
 comply would be given subsidized jobs, but would only be
 59
 paid if they showed up for work.

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"Workfare--It Isn't Work, It Isn't Fair," The
New York Times, 19 Aug. 1988, sec. 1, p. 27.

58

Stein, On Relief, p. 33.

59

"More Funds for Training Programs," The New
York Times, 7 July 1988, sec. 2, p. 4.

County officials in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. have found that relatively few recipients show up for their workfare program, despite the risk of losing their assistance. Officials with the Department of Social Services assume that many of the recipients are already employed. Recipients are sent two notices to report for work before losing their assistance. Out of 345 recipients, 254 have failed to show.⁶⁰

Welfare training programs do not appear to remove a large number of recipients from the welfare rolls.⁶¹ Reform has focused on providing support in exchange for some efforts by the recipients to help themselves.⁶²

But a lot of recipients don't take the training programs seriously. Many have been playing the system for a long time. Welfare reform is not an entirely new concept. There have been many job/training programs in the past:

-The 1967 Work Incentive Program (WIN) required employable recipients to register for social and job services as a condition of income support;

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"Few Show Up for 'Workfare' Jobs," The New York Times, 19 March 1988, sec. 1, p. 29.

⁶¹

"Data Back Welfare Overhaul," The New York Times, 22 Jan. 1988, sec. 1, p. 21.

⁶²

"Tie Benefits More Closely to Work," The New York Times, 17 July 1988, sec. 3, p. 2.

-The 1981 Omnibus Reconciliation Act (OBRA) permitted states to mount workfare programs and gave states greater leeway in designing other WIN programs to meet local market conditions;

-The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of the 1970s and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of the 1980s provided the models for current programs.⁶³

These programs have tended to be short-term make-work programs with limited success. Occasionally manpower programs work to increase the number of jobs available to low-income workers, but have not noticeably reduced poverty.⁶⁴

Probably one of the most innovative welfare reforms was the "30 and a third rule." This rule, adopted in 1967, allowed recipients who worked to keep some of their welfare benefits by disregarding a proportion of their income. The logic behind it was "why should a welfare recipient get a job if it means giving up income or benefits?" Of course there was one hitch. There is no way to make it easier to get off welfare without also

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Sarah K. Gideonse and William R. Meyers, "Why 'Workfare' Fails," Challenge, Jan./Feb. 1988, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁴

Ibid., p. 47.

making it more attractive to get on welfare in the first place. The policy was adopted on the basis of the people who already exhibited the problem government wanted to solve, while being blind to the effects of the policy on people who did not yet exhibit the problem.⁶⁵ Many of the working poor see welfare as an answer to their problems of lack of skills and training.

THE MOST PROGRAM

Michigan's MOST program offers opportunities to receive education and training, as well as supportive services to assist in attending the education or training programs. MOST offers programs to assist with Adult Basic Education, High School Completion, General Education, Vocational Education/Training, Postsecondary Education, Job Club, Job Search, Job Development and Placement, and On-the-Job-Training. It also assists its clients through counseling, day care, medical exams,⁶⁶ relocation assistance, transportation and clothing. Other MOST projects have included screening for SSI, job referrals to the Department of Natural Resources,

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"Tie Benefits More Closely to Work," The New York Times.

66

Bureau of Employment Services, Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training (MOST) Program: Detailed Program Description, Aug. 1987.

Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps, and Michigan Youth
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Corps.

In addition to these government sponsored jobs, employment may be obtained through private employers with government subsidies. Subsidized jobs are usually on-the-job training programs in which the government absorbs the employer's cost of training. At the end of the training period the subsidy stops. The employer keeps those trainees whom he wants if he has a need for them, and attempts are made to place the others. Because the training is for a specific job, it is ideal
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for the employer to do the training.

These types of programs are invaluable in a tight job market. The employer will be likely to provide good training because he'll want to hire at least some of the trainees. The job market benefits by having more skilled applicants. The skills of a previously unemployable person can be greatly enhanced through on-the-job
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training.

Obviously the idea behind the 1988 Family Support

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Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 36.

68

Stein, On Relief, p. 197.

69

Ibid.

Act, calling for greater welfare reforms, is not a new one, but a broadening of a trend already well designed in many states. But studies have shown that with only modest levels of funding, the results have been minimal. Now with the 1988 bill and additional funding, it is hoped that government spending will lead to reduced welfare dependency, something that previous reforms have done poorly at.

But critics argue that the 1988 bill is still lacking in incentives to encourage people to work. A big problem is lack of health care. One solution would be to make free medical coverage available to everyone. Most people feel that health care, like education, should be available to everyone. Others feel that the employer should help employees buy health insurance. At the same time, many people agree to workers making partial payment for their insurance.

One example of this is the one-third-share plan which was piloted in two Michigan counties in 1988. Former GA or Medicaid recipients who left public

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"Welfare Without Dependency," The New York Times, 25 Jan. 1988, sec. 1, p. 26.

71

Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 86.

assistance to work in a job that had no health insurance, were able to share the cost of health insurance equally with the employer and the state. It is intended to make health care more available to GA medical recipients and low-income working people with no health insurance.⁷² Unless the concern of health care is addressed, a reform bill can not expect to be met with tremendous success.

Governors, legislators, welfare administrators and private groups are calling for a change. Governors want to reduce burdensome welfare costs as federal grants to states decline. At the same time, they want to promote the economic prosperity of their states.⁷³

According to Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, "The traditional welfare system provided the necessary financial assistance, but at a cost to the recipients. The price they paid was long-term dependency. There were few options available to them to break that cycle. To keep people trapped in this system by offering them no way out is a human tragedy. People need and want a

⁷² Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 19.

⁷³ Gideonse and Meyers, "Why Workfare Fails," Challenge, p. 45.

way out of the dependency cycle."

During the 1960s it was felt that the war on poverty should focus on youth, thus preventing entry into poverty. Education was emphasized as the core of any successful attack on poverty. It was also determined that many who were willing to work may have been blocked by technology, job shortages and racial discrimination.⁷⁵

In 1970, for every one-hundred children of high school age, eighty-seven entered high school and sixty-seven graduated. Only thirty entered college and fifteen graduated. The uneducated were at an even greater disadvantage in the job market than they were twenty years earlier. 57 percent of dropouts under twenty-five were unemployed over a five year period, while only 4 percent of college graduates were without work.⁷⁶

The large number of unemployed and unskilled people added to a smaller youth population has created labor shortages that threaten our economy. There is much

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Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Social Services, BEST.

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Patterson, America's Struggle, p. 136.

76

Rein, Social Policy, pp. 92-93.

concern about creating a group of permanently unemployed individuals with no skills and no means of support.⁷⁷

Labor analysts predict that in ten years, there will be even fewer employable people, and in parts of the economy there will be more jobs than people.⁷⁸

In New Jersey, former Governor Kean estimated that in the mid-1990s his state will have 150,000 unfilled jobs. "We need these people (welfare recipients) desperately in the economy," he says.⁷⁹

This startling fact has become an important factor in convincing Congress of the need for welfare reform. As Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton put it, "The overriding concern is that we really don't have a person to waste in this country."⁸⁰

Governor Clinton, along with then Governor Kean and Delaware Governor Michael N. Castle led an intensive lobbying group in Congress. The governors joined as a political force to push for welfare revision in 1987. Their intervention is believed to have been crucial to

77

Gideonse and Meyers, "Why Workfare Fails," Challenge, p. 45.

78

"Workfare," The New York Times.

79

"The Welfare Consensus," The New York Times, 22 June 1988, sec. 1, p. 1.

80

Ibid.

the 1988 welfare reforms in Congress.

It may not be as easy to convince welfare recipients that reforms are in order. Non-labor income tends to discourage work. People also tend to shun work because of the reduction of wages caused by taxes and other employment expenses.

82

If we are to convince people to work, we must offer incentives such as tax credits, wage subsidies, day care, and a raise in the minimum wage to about \$4.50 an hour, which is the level it stood at during most of the 1960s and 1970s when adjusted for inflation. We also have to insure continued medical coverage. These measures would help reduce poverty among the working poor and provide the push needed to get people off welfare.

83

There is a need for a program of full employment. The unemployed need a forum to voice their concerns. Through organization, they could demand legal benefits, causing local costs to rise, and focusing national attention on their plight. When the working poor

81

Ibid.

82

Lampman, Social Welfare Spending, p. 120.

83

"Treat the Causes," The New York Times.

organize to get the supplemental benefits they are entitled to, they too may call attention to the need for a higher minimum wage.⁸⁴

Although it was known that in 1975, nearly 8 million people (half of them white) were on welfare, it was not generally known that for every person on welfare, there was at least one more who probably qualified for assistance but was not receiving it. (In Philadelphia, as in many other places, the department turned down half of all who applied, and lawyers estimated that half these rejections were illegal.)⁸⁵

Many states have been sensitive to the needs of their poor and have initiated reforms to aid in the transition from welfare to work.

-Mississippi provides a cash reimbursement for expenses incurred in entering jobs, training or education.⁸⁶

-Michigan is beginning to extend health care coverage for four months when a GA recipient obtains employment and leaves public assistance.⁸⁷

⁸⁴
Ibid.

⁸⁵
Cloward and Piven, Politics of Turmoil, p. 140.

⁸⁶
Mississippi State Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report Fiscal Year 1988.

⁸⁷
Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 39.

-Michigan recruited and hired 500 public service aides from the MOST registrant population to provide relief to overburdened local office staff. The aides receive medical benefits and a starting pay of over \$5.00 per hour.⁸⁸

Other states have focused on the root of the problem--lack of education. The first program in the nation to link welfare payments to student attendance started in Wisconsin in Feb. 1988. This program is known as learnfare and was passed at the urging of Gov. Thompson to attempt to discourage welfare dependency at an early age. In some cases the kids need special attention to get back into the education system. The states provide special classes for those who need to catch up, and individual instruction in extreme cases.⁸⁹

The program's objective is to ultimately break the cycle of welfare dependency, says the Governor. "We are trying to end welfare dependency at a young age, and more importantly," he says, "get our children back into the schools." Students who return to school must not

⁸⁸

Ibid.

⁸⁹

"Tying Welfare to School Attendance," The New York Times, 3 Jan. 1988, sec. 12, p. 7.

miss more than three days a month or their families will be penalized for that month. Those not in school at all could see their benefits cut as much as 80%.⁹⁰

Michigan, on the other hand, is paying students to attend college. The state has established a financial aid program to encourage individuals from low income families to graduate from high school and attend a community college.⁹¹

The Tuition Incentive Program, TIP, was conceived and introduced as legislation by State Senator Dan DeGrow in 1987. His concern, along with that of the Governor, other legislators and members of the executive branch, was to find an effective manner of reducing the state's high school drop out rate, especially among low-income youth.⁹²

The result of these legislative and executive office concerns was Public Act 124 of 1987. This act directed the Department of Social Services to establish an educational incentive program for low-income youth. The intent of the program is two-fold: to reduce the

⁹⁰

Ibid.

⁹¹

Michigan Dept. of Social Services, Biennial Report, p. 32.

⁹²

Michigan Dept. of Social Services, TIP Annual Report, p. 2.

high drop-out rate in our high schools, and to reduce
the need for long-term public assistance by educating
our young people.

The Methodology

COMPARISON OF WRITINGS ON WELFARE

This paper is an attempt to look at the overall affect of the GA program on its recipients. It examines the history of the GA program, through various writings published by state welfare agencies, and compares current information on the program, also published by state agencies.

This study looks at past reforms, the failures of those reforms, current reforms, the writings of welfare experts, and an interview with a professional social worker, and incorporates these with the writer's personal knowledge as a welfare professional. It examines the results of the most recent reforms in welfare. It will attempt to determine if those reforms have resulted in negative change, positive change, or no change at all.

CASE STUDIES IN MOST

Case studies are developed on welfare recipients. A random sampling of 15 GA clients is examined to explore possible reasons why individuals remain on GA based on an assessment of their deficiencies as indicated on Personal Information forms, and MOST Registration forms, which are completed by the client and the worker at intake and orientation. These studies

also look at characteristics such as age, sex, educational level, and previous employment. The small sample size and the lack of detailed information may limit the study somewhat.

Questions asked on the forms include: "When did you last work?" "Why did this job end?" "What was your favorite job?" "What is your ideal job?" "Can you get to work or training?" "What can we do to improve your employability?" "Will you move to another area to accept a job?" The answers to these questions provide insight into whether a client is willing to work, and if he is capable of doing the job he desires.

This study then looks at the changes in the system to determine if GA is accomplishing what it was established to do. It studies the number of recipients who show for appointments, the number who complete their assignments, the number who become employed, and the number who are sanctioned over several months.

Finally this paper looks at whether GA fails to benefit the recipient in the long run by taking away his initiative to become self-supporting, thus contributing to long-term dependency and a welfare ethic.

This is a prescriptive policy analysis based on evidence examined by the writer as prescriptions for the perceived problem, and the writer's policy proposals. This is interpretive research, being subjective, based on the writer's observance of poor skills, inadequate education, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, poor attitude, and ignorance by a large number of welfare recipients. Examples of these traits include unwillingness by recipients to enroll in educational programs, numerous poor excuses for not reporting to assignments, poor performance in programs, and unwillingness to accept job offers. The writer's observations are verified by the conclusions of various welfare experts cited from the literature.

Examples of the forms used to question clients are shown in the appendix. The following analysis is the compilation of months of evidence of the above mentioned problems which prevent GA clients from becoming self-sufficient. The analysis attempts to show why clients are at a general disadvantage from the average working person in skills, education, experience and motivation.

The Analysis-Assessment of MOST

PROBLEMS

In Michigan, as in other states, the GA caseloads increased dramatically during the early 1980s. Michigan's GA cases went from 49,733 in 1979 to a high of 156,203 in March 1984. Caseloads have dropped considerably since then, but in 1988 remained at 93,300,⁹⁴ a level nearly double pre-recession times.

Client characteristics help explain why GA recipients are unemployed. Approximately 60% of GA clients live in areas of high unemployment. Approximately 1/2 of GA clients do not have high school diplomas. Data from the MOST program show how important education is in the job market. Only 46.5% of the MOST program participants had high school diplomas; but they obtained 63.5% of the jobs. The 52.5% who had no high school diplomas obtained only 35.9% of the job⁹⁵ placements.

Equally important is experience. According to a University of Michigan employer survey, work experience is a selection criteria about 30% of the time, yet 66%

94
Babcock, Letter.

95
Ibid.

40

of GA clients have not worked within the last 5 years,
and 61% of GA clients have no employment history.

Saginaw County records the results for ADC and GA combined. During April 1989, a total of 40 registrants obtained employment. This is out of 3,012 MOST cases. During May, a total of 54 registrants obtained employment. This is out of 3,012 MOST cases. During June, a total of 69 registrants obtained employment.

TABLE 1-MOST Intake Orientations
Saginaw County, Dec. 1988-May 1989

Month	#of Sessions	#Clients Scheduled	#Clients Appeared	\$Savings in MOST Reductions/Closures
Dec.	4	222	93	78,064
Jan.	5	290	122	Not recorded
Feb.	4	215	80	70,344
Mar.	5	258	102	57,984
Apr.	4	217	89	44,238
May	4	223	83	Not recorded

Source:Saginaw County Dept. of Social Services, MOST Local Office Plan and Monthly Reports.

These figures show a less than 50% MOST participation rate, and explains the low level of MOST participation. It is difficult to help people who don't cooperate.

Getting people to participate stems from several

problems that are classic examples of the welfare worker's challenge. There are many problems that make GA clients difficult to remove from the welfare rolls. They include poor reading skills or illiteracy; extra income or working on the side; the belief that they will someday return to their former well paying jobs, or "GM delusion"; and the failure to take threat of sanctions seriously. The following case studies show examples of clients who exhibit problems that make it difficult to significantly reduce the welfare load.

Problem:Lack of Experience

A large number of GA recipients have no employment history. This may be either by choice or by chance. The problem becomes more apparent on an employment application which may ask the same questions that were asked on a MOST application at orientation.

Question:Age?

Answer:21

Question:When was your last job held?

Answer:Never.

The same answer was found on the application of a 26 year old, and obviously, the older the applicant, the worse the answer would look to a prospective employer.

Providing on-the-job training programs can be very effective in enhancing the experience of welfare recipients and their employability.

Problem:Illiteracy

While many welfare recipients are illiterate, some of them merely lack mastery of the English language necessary to compete in the job market. For example, when reviewing MOST applications, the following was found.

Question:What kind of work would you like to do?

Answer:"Anythink."

Question:Under what conditions would you move to another community?

Answer:"If there a reliable work."

Question:What were your job responsibilities (at last job)?

Answer:"Kepping fries station clean."

Question:Can you get to work or training?

Answer:"I don't tran"

These are mostly younger clients, under age 26, and expected to be the most employable. But how is an employer to know that the applicant can read, if he can't understand what he writes?

O.D. is a 26 year old, single male GA recipient. He is a high school graduate and was assigned to an assessment program through a MOST contractor. O.D. spent the first 15 minutes of his assessment asking silly questions and playing the class clown, much to the annoyance of his assessor and the MOST worker. After O.D. was taken out of the class, he tearfully admitted his problem. He can't read.

Unfortunately, O.D. is not alone. He is one of many who fails to succeed because of a society that fails to invest in the individual who is poor. MOST workers are frequently required to remove a client from an assignment because he or she can't do the work. In most cases the client is referred to Adult Basic Education, but in many cases, such as O.D.'s, the client is too embarrassed to attend the classes. And how can you force someone to learn to read?

Problem:Working on the Side

J.B. is a single, 32 year old GA recipient with 6 illegitimate children by five different women. J.B. is a certified mechanic but has managed to remain unemployed for the past 11 years. J.B. received a job

opportunity but turned it down because it only paid \$4.50 an hour, and he admits to making two or three times that working at home, and since he gets paid under the table, he doesn't have to pay child support. He earns adequate income to support himself, but it is nice to have welfare pay the rent and support his children. He can be sanctioned, but when a client is working, sanctions are merely a minor and temporary inconvenience.

S.L. has had a number of jobs, from cook to dishwasher to meatpacker to floral assistant. S.L. is 27 years old and a single GA recipient who just can't seem to make up his mind to get his mechanic's certification but works regularly in his uncle's garage where he gets paid under the table. S.L. should have no trouble passing the certification exam since he scored extremely well on his assessment tests. S.L. could easily support himself on even a \$4.50 an hour mechanic's job since he has no children. It may be that both J.B. and S.L. are caught up in what Cloward and Piven describe as the "gimme" syndrome, and feel that although they are earning money, the government still

owes them. Or it could be that they are simply Furrham and Rose's "super-scroungers," enjoying the good life by living off the welfare system. Until employment can be made more attractive than GA, we will always have J.B.s and S.L.s.

Problem:GM Delusion

Being General Motors towns, Flint and Saginaw have always relied on the automaker to keep its labor force employed. Now that GM is no longer hiring laborers, there remain thousands of laid off autoworkers who have turned to welfare for food and shelter. Many of these workers still carry the delusion that they will someday be called back to GM or find a manufacturing job that pays what GM pays. It is difficult to convince these workers that that will not happen. When asked on a MOST application "What type of work would you like to do," typical answers are "Work in the plant," or "Work that pays \$10 an hour." It is impossible to convince these people that they can't command \$10 an hour jobs with \$2 skills. A large number won't even begin to look for a job that pays less.

Problem:Failure to Take Threat of Sanctions Seriously

The MOST program permits a recipient's case to be closed for failure to comply with program requirements.

The sanction process can be a lengthy one however, and many recipients don't take the threats seriously. A recipient is allowed at least two appointments. If the recipient contacts the worker with what seems like a good excuse, he or she must be rescheduled, and rescheduling may occur as long as the recipient has a seemingly reasonable excuse. These excuses may or may not be valid, but that is often difficult for the worker to determine.

The following example shows the steps taken to try to get a recipient to participate, finally resulting in a sanction. The recipients continue to receive their welfare check up until the time that the sanction is actually put into effect.

1/25/88 Client failed to report for assignment. No contact/no excuse. Client rescheduled.

3/15/88 Client terminated due to excessive absences. His reason:He had a run in with the instructor. Says it won't happen again. Client keeps third appointment.

3/13/89 Client given new assignment. Failed to report. His reason:He was performing community service work to work off traffic tickets.

4/3/89 Client failed to report. His reason:He was moving and couldn't make it.

5/15/89 Client failed to report. No contact/no excuse. Client subsequently allows his case to close by failure to return his monthly report to his GA/Food Stamp worker. This eliminates the MOST worker's chance to proceed with the imminent sanction. It also allows the client to re-apply for assistance at any time with a clean start. The entire assignment process will have to begin again when the client re-applies for GA.

Here's another example.

8/8/88 Client failed to report for assignment. No contact/no excuse.

8/15/88 Client failed to report for assignment. No contact/no excuse.

8/31/88 Worker proceeds with sanction. At this point client calls to say he was out of town. Worker deletes sanction and allows client another chance.

5/15/89 Client failed to report for assignment. No contact/no excuse.

5/30/89 Client failed to report for assignment. No contact/no excuse. Worker is again about to proceed

with the sanction, but at this point the client allows his case to close.

These examples are more the rule than the exception. This is not to imply that a client should not be given a second chance, because in some cases, the client has a legitimate excuse for missing an assignment. But perhaps those with a history of missing assignments without an excuse should be placed on a stricter plan.

Dealing with such red tape becomes a nightmare for the already overworked MOST worker. The worker may become frustrated at the prospect of trying to impose sanctions while many clients seem to never tire of the game. In interviewing a 12 year employee of a state social services agency, a sense of frustration was immediately apparent. The worker, who specializes in employment and training, is also unhappy that the state pays out so much in supportive services, especially car repairs, and requires so little in return. She cites as examples, a client who had a car repaired for her boyfriend; a client who sold the car immediately after the state paid for repairs; and a mechanic who padded

car repair estimates and split the profits with the client. She feels that there is need for serious change.

She feels that GA clients especially have no motivation to get jobs. She feels that the welfare system makes clients dependent because they realize that help is just a phone call away. She further believes that the system is doing these people a terrible injustice and that it's time to cut the strings and let them learn to stand on their own two feet.

This is just one worker's opinion, but it is echoed by her co-workers who declined to be interviewed. So what can be done?

Although the disbursement of many services is left to the discretion of the administrators of local offices, much of it is dictated by state legislation. So first of all, the legislature has to be convinced that the aforementioned problems exist. Then they have to be convinced that they are more costly to the taxpayers than they are beneficial to the recipients.

This study has found that although a large number of recipients have a cavalier attitude about welfare

(approx. 50%, based on their failure to participate in training programs, and their willingness to allow their cases to close, only a small amount are deliberately fraudulent and dishonest with the MOST program (approx. 5-10%). This is based on the cases where the client is actually found to be working and is thus counted by the state. The instances where the client is never reported or discovered can not be counted.

Given such small numbers, it may be difficult to convince the legislature that the proposed changes would be in order. Although the reports show no significant correlation between crime and GA payments, they do show that lack of employment increases the tendency to commit crimes.

It is the belief of this writer that the proposed changes would be cost effective. Each GA recipient costs the state roughly \$2803 per year ($\233.60×12 months). Each of these recipients has the potential to earn a minimum of \$6700 a year ($3.35/\text{hr.} \times 40 \text{ hours} \times 50$ weeks). That's \$6700 that could be flowing into the economy, rather than the \$2803 tax burden.

SOLUTIONS

This paper should raise enough interest to motivate the legislators to make some much needed changes. The following proposals are recommended:

1. Education

Education is the one place where government can begin to stop the poverty problem before it begins. The educational system at one time helped to develop critical life skills in children along with the family, but since the beginning of the baby boom, increased class size has forced the elimination of such teaching in favor of covering material. Too many students are falling behind in that rush.

Government must renew its commitment to quality education. Cash incentives to keep kids in school should be offered. The short-term cost will pay off in the long run through a more educated, employable population.

2. Health Care

The guarantee of health care is the only way the government will be able to move many recipients off welfare and into employment. Currently over one million people in Michigan have no medical benefits at all,

including Medicaid. Too many people are afraid to leave public assistance and risk becoming ill and having no way to pay for doctors, hospitalization or medicine.

It would behoove the states to offer health plans where they pick up one-third of the cost, allowing the employer and the employee to pick up the remaining two-thirds. Lack of health care is a vital missing link in many proposals for welfare reform.

3. Employment

The states must take a more active role in placing clients in employment. The money wasted on endless, useless training programs could be used to hire people for public service. Surely the states should be willing to hire those people that they expect the private sector to hire.

Again the costs of employment would be offset by the decrease in welfare, the increased tax revenue, the benefit to the economy through increased purchasing power, and the general overall betterment of society.

4. Making Good on Threats of Sanctions

The state needs to take a serious stance on clients who fail to comply. Instead of handing out money first, and then expecting clients to participate in MOST, the client needs to be actively participating in a MOST component before he receives his first check. That check should be withheld if the client fails to show up for an assignment without good reason. Would you get paid if you never showed up for work? Why should these people? Unless the conditions of that check are tied to something the client can understand, like hunger, he doesn't take it seriously. And the fact that he can give the MOST worker the runaround for months, sometimes years, only makes the threat of sanctions more of a joke.

Let's face it. With the lack of high-paying jobs in our high-tech society, there are recipients who sell crack, cocaine, marijuana, stolen goods and their bodies to supplement their welfare checks. Because the penalty is mild, clients are comfortable with using that undeclared income to get by when threatened with a sanction, so why should they be concerned? A sanction is only good for up to 90 days, in many cases as little

as 30 days, then the recipient can re-apply. If the length of sanctions were increased to 6 months, clients would be forced to take them more seriously.

There is no reason why a client should be able to put a welfare worker through all the paperwork and runaround that they do (a sanction requires 5 sheets of paperwork for the MOST worker alone).

5. Length of Time Eligible

Currently, a person is eligible for General Assistance for as long as he or she is unemployed, thus there is no rush to get off GA. There should be a maximum imposed of two years eligibility, except in extenuating circumstances, such as serious illness. All recipients claiming medical disability should be required to apply for SSI.

These changes are tough enough to make a great difference in the attitudes of both the workers and the recipients, without being unduly harsh to anyone who genuinely needs the assistance. If they need it, let them do something in exchange for it.

The Conclusions

This study has found that welfare is necessary in a capitalist society. In our prescriptive analysis, we must agree with Stein when he said that welfare is needed to make the nonpoor feel better. At the same time, we must have programs like MOST to make that same nonpoor feel that they are getting something for the tax dollars that are spent on welfare. Such education and training programs serve to appease the taxpayers, if nothing else.

We agree with Patterson that what is needed are jobs, not more training programs. But jobs are rarely included in welfare reform programs. When they are, they are usually low paying and/or temporary. We must therefore agree with Greenberg when he says that we'll always have unemployment and welfare in some form.

It appears, in fact, that the welfare system as a temporary hand is designed to fail. But as a form of dependency it succeeds quite well. After all, if welfare succeeded in getting people off it, it would have to shut down, and look at all the welfare workers who'd be out of work. They certainly couldn't apply for welfare because it would no longer exist.

Because such a small percentage of people are on welfare, they have little voice in forcing the government to provide them with jobs. And the government seems to ignore the need for more jobs. After all, the unemployed are more likely to be uneducated and unlikely to raise a fuss collectively. As long as they have no effect on the re-election of a particular Congressman, they continue to go unrepresented.

The fact that only a small percentage of welfare recipients can be shown to be deliberately fraudulent may make it difficult to convince the legislators of a need for change, but economically, it should be considered for the good of the community. An employed person is worth more to the community than an unemployed person, by virtue of his earning power, his tax potential, and his purchasing power.

Economic considerations aside, we should consider the return of the GA recipient's sense of pride and self-worth at having earned a living rather than accepting handouts year after year after year. To

become an old man and to never have worked enough to earn social security is one of the most frightening thoughts a rational human being can contemplate. It is sad that many GA recipients may never have considered it, but if they never pay into social security, they'll never be able to draw from it. How would it feel to be 75 and still going in to see your GA case worker?

Many young GA recipients have no concept of working an eight hour day. These are men and women of child-bearing age. What kind of example can they set for their future offspring if they can't even tell their children what they do for a living. The females are destined for ADC, the males are destined for prison, and the children have no positive role model, so the cycle continues.

The legislature must be made to realize that the waste of human potential is a burden to society. Society can not be completely functional if all its resources are not utilized. Although corporate capitalism is a powerful force, the conscience of the legislator must be awakened. If he has enough

conscience to fight abortion of undeveloped fetuses, he should have enough conscience to fight the abortion of undeveloped human potential.

It is by no means a simple task. New laws must be written and passed. Thousands of state workers must be reassigned or displaced. Thousands of GA recipients must experience a most disconcerting shock. Our whole way of viewing the welfare system will be altered. The economy will go into a recession. But in time, it will level off. Individuals will adjust. They do in other states. Want ads will be answered. Welfare rolls will shrink. Children will be proud of their parents, and parents will be proud of their children. And maybe it will be the push that many GA recipients have been waiting for.

Appendix

PERSONAL INFORMATION RECORD
Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training Program
Michigan Department of Social Services

Instructions:

Please provide the information asked for beginning on the this page, to the best of your ability. If the question doesn't apply to you, put "N/A." If you feel your response is too personal put "T/P." The information you provide will be used to decide which MOST assignments will be more valuable to you and to aid in the development of your self-support plan. The information you provide will be held STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1 - Personal Data

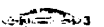
Name (Last, First, Middle)	Telephone Number	Message Telephone Number
Address (Street Number and Name)	Social Security Number	Age
City State Zip Code	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	
Directions to your home if no street number		

SECTION II - Education and Training Background

Check the highest grade you completed in school <input type="checkbox"/> 1-6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 12+	
Do you have a high school diploma? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Would you take an assignment to go to school to obtain one? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Name of college, business or trade school attended	From To
Major	Certificate, Degree or License obtained
Name of college, business or trade school attended	From To
Major	Certificate, degree or license obtained
Vocational, apprenticeship training, on-the-job training, "other" training received	
Are you currently taking any classes or courses <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	What are they?
Where?	When do you expect to finish?
What is your funding source?	What are the hours?
Have you completed a job club? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Have you ever had a vocational assessment? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do you have limitations on your ability to work, such as "Can only lift 20 lbs.?"	

SECTION III - Limiting Your Ability to Work

Are you taking any medications that would limit your ability to work? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, explain		
Indicate any other comments you would like to make about your health.		
Are there any legal problems with your children? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Do you have an upcoming court appearance? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Have you ever filed a worker's compensation claim or received a settlement? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes



SECTION IV - Day Care

Names of children needing day care if you are in training or working	Age	Hours required	
		From	To
Would you like to discuss your day care situation with a Services worker? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

SECTION V - Transportation

Do you own a car or truck? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, year ►	Do you have a driver's licence? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do you live near a bus line or have access to dial-a-ride? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	What is the distance to the bus stop?
What is your primary means of transportation?	

SECTION VI - Employment Desired

Indicate the types of work you are interested in	
What would be your ideal job?	Indicate any hours you are unable to work
Under what conditions would you move to another community?	

SECTION VII - Training/Education Desired

Are you interested in schooling, training or education? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If Yes, which one:	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Basic Education (ABE)	<input type="checkbox"/> General Education Development (GED)
	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Completion (HSC)	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Training <input type="checkbox"/> College
What kind of training are you interested in?		
Do you plan to complete high school or get your GED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Explain anything that would prevent you from participation		

SECTION VIII - Employment History

Are you working now? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Employer's name
	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed name
Do you expect to be called back to work? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes →	When
Are you a union member <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If Yes →	Union name
Have you ever done any volunteer work? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	

SECTION IX - Last Employment

Last employer's name	Duration of employment	
	Start date	End date
Job title		
Job responsibilities		
Reason for leaving	Last supervisor's name	

SECTION X - Longest Employer

Employer's name	Duration of employment	
	Start date	End date
Job title		
Job responsibilities		
Reason for leaving	Supervisor's name	
What was the best job you ever had and why?		
What skills do you have from past employment?		

SECTION IX - Military History

Are you a veteran? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Are you still eligible for VA educational benefits? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Rank	
Military duties	

SECTION XII - Client's comments

Client's signature	Date

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