

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

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Motivating People from Welfare to Work

Job training and education ease the transition.

Welfare to work programs continue to receive national recognition for their ability to move individuals from the welfare system and into economic self-sufficiency. The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Land-Grant universities have taken the lead in implementing programs that, from a holistic approach, address education, employment, and family and personal well-being of people striving for independence.

Payoff

- **Finding a job.** In New Mexico, more than 26,000 families will leave welfare assistance and find jobs by June 30, 2002. Through a state contract, the **New Mexico State** Extension program is helping welfare clients in their transition into the work force. "New Mexico Works," a job training, education and placement program offered in nine counties, has served more than 7,300 participants. In 1999, six months into the program, more than 1,200 participants were employed. More than 1,100 jobs have been identified for clients in three counties, and 69 businesses are supporting the program by agreeing to employ clients.
- **The total package.** A **Montana State** Extension program, Educating Families to Achieve Independence in Montana (EDUFAIM), helps low-income families gain the confidence necessary to face everyday problems such as nutrition and health, stress management and money management. Since 1996, the program has assisted 750 adults and 185 youth. One client said, "I respect myself more and have more hope for the future...before, I was always depressed and mad; now I have something to look forward to every week."
- **Skills for success.** A **Georgia** Extension program has saved a county more than \$21,000 through a series of nutrition, food budgeting, money management and job skills classes. More than 15 participants obtained employment or permanent housing or no longer require welfare assistance. Getting these participants off food stamps will save the state thousands of dollars. One person's wages improved \$2 per hour because of enhanced job skills. In Alabama, **Auburn** Extension offers

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similar welfare programs that have placed 9,400 in the work force, adding more than \$3.5 million to the state and local economy in 1999.

- **Computer literate.** A computer training program in Missouri and South Carolina helps welfare recipients who are not computer literate find untapped job resources. **Lincoln University** and **South Carolina State** Extension programs are collaborating with the Department of Social Services to improve employment opportunities for under-employed and unemployed people. Programs in both states teach basic word processing, database functions and Internet use. At both universities 40 people have completed programs enhancing their self-confidence and employability. In South Carolina, two individuals completing the computer class are employed full time and totally off welfare assistance. Lincoln also offers a business development class. Three individuals completing this course wrote a business plan and started their own business.
- **A helping hand.** Welfare recipients in Kentucky's Montgomery and Bath counties can take a "Business Adventure" class offered by **Kentucky State** Extension, that provides job skills to welfare recipients. Of 60 participants, 28 are employed, five have received their GED certificate and six are continuing their education.
- **College opportunities.** **Wyoming** Extension is interested in using welfare surplus funds to offer college incentives to low-income families moving from welfare to work. **Wyoming** Extension specialists are working to implement a legislative policy that offers a college option in the state's welfare program. They are also developing a recruitment plan to heighten enrollment and improve work force development.
- **Weaning off public assistance.** In two years, public assistance will not be available to Maryland residents. There are still 200 welfare recipients in Calvert County who are unemployed and in need of employment skills and opportunities. A mandated welfare-to-work course, offered through the **Maryland** Extension program since 1997 prepares clients to manage work, family and household responsibilities. One year into the program,

57 residents have completed the course, two are full-time students and five have obtained jobs. **Nebraska** has a similar welfare-to-work program that has taught a single mother how to budget, make informed spending choices and improve her attitude about work. She plans to further her education in hopes of getting a higher-paying job.

- **Reducing pregnancy rates.** Researchers at **Cornell** are analyzing the value of policies designed to reduce the number of pregnancies among single welfare recipients. The study shows that such policies can be effective if benefits to single mothers having children while on welfare are decreased or eliminated. Additional research is needed to evaluate the effect on policies designed to lower teen pregnancy rates. This analysis will possibly have national impact as policy makers across the country use similar policies to affect the pregnancy rate among welfare recipients.
- **Family first.** As parents struggle to work fewer hours and spend more time with their families, **Idaho Extension** has developed a dual approach to ease the stress of work and family conflicts. Focused on welfare clients, the "Balancing Work and Family" curriculum helps working families develop a spending plan and learn shopping and cooking techniques and problem solving. More than 125 families have improved their food buying practices, budgeting skills and stress management techniques.



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