

GOAL NUMBER ONE
Strengthening Families

Purpose of document -
Beginning to frame how we
talk about WR

"We are working on reforming the welfare system, so that more people can move from dependence to independence; can be successful parents and successful workers."

President Bill Clinton
Boston, MA on March 14, 1994

"If we value strong families, we cannot perpetuate a system that penalizes those who stay together..."

"If we value personal responsibility, we cannot ignore the \$34 billion in child support that absent parents ought to be paying to millions of mothers and children. To absent parents who aren't paying their child support, we'll say, 'If you're not providing for your children, we'll garnish your wages, we'll suspend your license, we'll track you across state lines, and if necessary, we'll make some of you work off what you owe. People who bring children into this world can't just walk away...'"

"We will say to teenagers, 'If you have a child out of wedlock, we will no longer give you a check to set up a separate household. We want families to stay together...'"

"We dramatically increased the Earned Income Tax Credit to lift them out of poverty, to reward work over welfare, to make it possible for people to be successful workers and successful parents..."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address
January 25, 1994

POLICY COMPONENTS:

Helping Working Parents Support Their Children

- ▶ Child Care (All Components)
- ▶ Child Support Assurance Demonstrations
- ▶ Two-Parent Families Treated as Fairly as Single Parents
- ▶ EITC
- ▶ Health Insurance

Enforcing Responsibility for Non-Custodial Parents

- ▶ Paternity Establishment
- ▶ Child Support Enforcement
- ▶ Non-Custodial Parent Demonstrations

Preventing Dependency for Teenagers

- ▶ Pregnancy Prevention
- ▶ Requirements to Stay in School
- ▶ Minor Mothers Live at Home

changing from
work and Responsibility
to:
① supporting families
② changing the welfare office
(making welfare a transitional
system).

GOAL NUMBER TWO
Welfare As A Transition To Work

"And to all those who depend on welfare, we should offer this simple compact: We will provide the support, the job training, the child care you need for up to two years. But after that, anyone who can work must work -- in the private sector, if possible, in community service, if necessary. We will make welfare what it ought to be: A second chance, not a way of life..."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address
January 25, 1994

POLICY COMPONENTS:

Changing the Culture of the Welfare Office

- ▶ Education and Training
- ▶ Child care and Transportation Assistance ?
- ▶ Job Search
- ▶ Focus on Moving To Work
- ▶ Real Case Management

Two-Year Time Limit

- ▶ Everyone Who Is Able Is Expected To Do Something From The First Day
- ▶ Limited Exemptions Available at State Determination
- ▶ Work for Wages/A Paycheck, Not a Welfare Check

Promoting Work and Opportunity

- ▶ Preference for Private Sector Jobs
- ▶ Public Sector Jobs as Last Resort
- ▶ The Dignity and the Responsibility of a Real Job

GOAL NUMBER THREE
Building A Realistic Partnership For Change

"We gave the states more power to innovate -- because we know that great ideas can come from outside Washington -- and many states are using it..."

"I worked for years on this welfare problem, and I can tell you: the people who most want to change welfare are the very people on it. They want to get off welfare, and get back to work, and support their children..."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address
January 25, 1994

POLICY COMPONENTS:

Responsiveness To States

- ▶ Responding to the Local Labor Market
- ▶ Stepped-up Phase-in
- ▶ Encouraging State Innovation

Private Sector Involvement

- ▶ Subsidies
- ▶ Microenterprises
- ▶ Private Industry Councils

A New Compact With Recipients

- ▶ Personal Responsibility Contracts
- ▶ Employability Plan
- ▶ Exemption Determination

GOAL NUMBER FOUR
Responsibility and Accountability

"Just as we must transform our unemployment system, we must also revolutionize our welfare system. It doesn't work. It defies our values as a nation..."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address
January 25, 1994

POLICY COMPONENTS:

Accountability for Taxpayers

- ▶ Rewarding Work, Not Dependency
- ▶ Ending Disincentives in the Current System
- ▶ Reinforcing Values: Work, Family, Opportunity, Responsibility

Preventing Fraud

- ▶ National Database
- ▶ Better Use of Technology

Rewarding Performance, Not Process

- ▶ Simplification Between Programs
- ▶ Performance Incentives
- ▶ Co-ordinated Dissemination of Information of Various Assistance Programs
- ▶ More Efficient Use of Resources through Bureaucratic Simplification

H. Way

For Background Use Only

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3/9/94 used for press background

The AFDC Program: The Context for Reform

- ▶ **\$22 billion in benefit payments**
- ▶ **4.8 million families**
- ▶ **Average monthly check = \$388**

- ▶ **70% of entrants off within two years.**
- ▶ **But two thirds of those who leave come back on within three years.**

Recent Reforms

The 1988 Family Support Act

- ▶ **Established Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program**
- ▶ **Over half of recipients deferred from participation**
- ▶ **States must serve 15% of those not deferred**

State Reform Efforts

- ▶ **Twelve states have substantial welfare reform demonstrations.**
- ▶ **Various approaches to time limits and work incentives:**

**California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa
Michigan, Vermont, Wisconsin**

Values Behind Welfare Reform

- ▶ **Work**
- ▶ **Responsibility**
- ▶ **Family**
- ▶ **Opportunity**

A New Vision

- ▶ **Transitional Assistance Followed by Work**
- ▶ **Making Work Pay**
- ▶ **Parental Responsibility and Prevention**
- ▶ **Reinventing Government Assistance**

**A New Vision:
Transitional Assistance Followed by Work**

- ▶ **Full participation**
- ▶ **Training, education and job placement services (the JOBS program)**
- ▶ **Time limits**
- ▶ **Work for those who exhaust their time limit (the WORK program)**

Improving the JOBS Program

Full Participation

Training, Education and Placement (the JOBS program)

- ▶ **Personal responsibility contract & employability plan**
- ▶ **Focus on work & private sector placement**
- ▶ **Closer coordination & integration with existing mainstream education & training program**
- ▶ **Emphasis on worker support once people are placed in a job**

The Post-Two-Year WORK Program

Temporary work opportunities after the time limit for those unable to find unsubsidized work

- ▶ **Community involvement and oversight**
- ▶ **Emphasis on private sector placements**
- ▶ **Flexible placement options**
 - ▶ employer subsidies
 - ▶ non-profit/community-based jobs
 - ▶ placements using new and existing initiatives
 - ▶ community service
- ▶ **Non-displacing placements**
- ▶ **Special provision for weak local economies**

The WORK Program: Work for Welfare Versus Work for Wages

Work for Wages

- ▶ **paycheck not welfare check**
- ▶ **dignity and responsibility of a "real job"**

Work for Welfare

- ▶ **uses existing administrative structure**
- ▶ **previous experience**
- ▶ **state flexibility**

Discouraging Long-Term WORK Participation

- ▶ **Sanctions for private sector job refusal**
- ▶ **Limited duration in any one placement**
- ▶ **Frequent job search**
- ▶ **No EITC benefits?**
- ▶ **Declining state reimbursement**
- ▶ **Limits or reassessment after several placements?**

Focus and Phase-In

- ▶ **How dramatic a change, how fast?**
- ▶ **Capacity constraints require phase-in.**
- ▶ **Phase-in alternatives:**
 - ▶ **Focus on new applicants and reapplicants?**
 - ▶ **Focus on young families?**

A New Vision: Making Work Pay

- ▶ **Health care reform**
- ▶ **Advance payment of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**
- ▶ **Child care for the working poor**

A New Vision: Parental Responsibility and Prevention

- ▶ **Child support enforcement**
- ▶ **Efforts aimed at minor mothers,
responsible family planning and
prevention**
- ▶ **Efforts to promote two-parent families**

A New Vision: Reinventing Government Assistance

- ▶ **Coordination, simplification and improved incentives in income support programs**
- ▶ **A performance-based system**

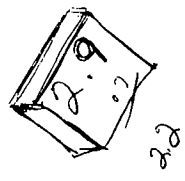
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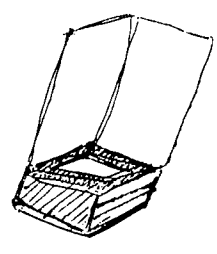
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state capacity

Kathi Way

For Immediate Release

June 21, 1994

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration and enactment the "Work and Responsibility Act of 1994."

It is time to end welfare as we know it and replace it with a system that is based on work and responsibility -- a system that will help people help themselves. This legislation reinforces the fundamental values of work, responsibility, family, and community. It rewards work over welfare. It signals that people should not have children until they are ready to support them, and that parents -- both parents -- who bring children into the world must take responsibility for supporting them. It gives people access to the skills they need and expects work in return. Most important, it will give people back the dignity that comes from work and independence. The cost of the proposal to the Federal Government is estimated at \$9.3 billion over 5 years and is fully offset, primarily through reductions in entitlements and without new tax increases.

The Work and Responsibility Act of 1994 will replace welfare with work. Under this legislation, welfare will be about a paycheck, not a welfare check. Our approach is based on a simple compact designed to reinforce and reward work. Each recipient will be required to develop a personal employability plan designed to move that individual into the work force as quickly as possible. Support, job training, and child care will be provided to help people move from dependence to independence. Time limits will ensure that anyone who can work, must work -- in the private sector if possible, in a temporary subsidized job if necessary.

This legislation includes several provisions aimed at creating a new culture of mutual responsibility. It includes provisions to promote parental responsibility and ensure that both parents contribute to their children's well-being. This legislation establishes the toughest child support enforcement program ever. It also includes: incentives directly tied to the performance of the welfare office; extensive efforts to detect and prevent welfare fraud; sanctions to prevent gaming of the welfare system; and a broad array of incentives that States can use to encourage responsible behavior.

Preventing teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births is a critical part of welfare reform. To prevent welfare dependency, teenagers must get the message that staying in school, postponing pregnancy, and preparing to work are the right things to do. Our prevention approach includes a national campaign against teen pregnancy and a national clearinghouse on teen pregnancy prevention. Roughly 1,000 middle and high schools in disadvantaged areas will receive grants to develop innovative teen pregnancy prevention programs.

The Work and Responsibility Act of 1994 proposes dramatic changes in our welfare system, changes so bold that they cannot be accomplished overnight. We can phase in these changes by focusing on young people, to send a clear message to the next

more

generation that we are ending welfare as we know it. The bill targets resources on welfare beneficiaries born after December 31, 1971. This means that over time, more and more welfare beneficiaries will be affected by the new rules: about a third of the caseload in 1997, and half by the year 2000. States that want to phase in faster will have the option of doing so.

The results of these changes will be far-reaching. In the year 2000, 2.4 million adults will be subject to the new rules under welfare reform, including time limits and work requirements. Almost 1 million people will be either off welfare or working.

But the impact of welfare reform cannot be measured in these numbers alone. This legislation is aimed at strengthening families and instilling personal responsibility by helping people help themselves. We owe every child in America the chance to watch their parents assume the responsibility and dignity of a real job. This bill is designed to make that possible.

I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this legislation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

THE WHITE HOUSE,
June 21, 1994.

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**WORKING GROUP ON WELFARE REFORM,
FAMILY SUPPORT AND INDEPENDENCE**

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

**Aerospace Building
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Seventh Floor
Washington, D.C. 20447
Fax: (202) 205-9688**

*mail report
for month
of June*

**Cover + 6 Page(s)
From: Toby Graff 401-9258**

Date 7-12-94

TO:

Mary Jo Bane	
David Ellwood	690-7383
Bruce Reed	456-7028
Kevin Thurm	690-7755
Ann Rosewater	
Kathi Way	456-7028
Wendell Primus	456-6562
John Monohan	690-5672
Margaret Pugh	690-5672
Jerry Klepner	690-7380
Mary Bourdette	690-8425
Helen Mathis	690-8425
Rich Tarplin	690-7380
Irene Bueno	690-7380
Jim Hickman	690-5749
Avis Lavelle	690-5673
Melissa Skolfield	690-5673
Ann Walker	456-2239
Jeremy Ben-Ami	456-7028
Amanda Crumley	456-6527
Patricia Sosa	
Emily Bromberg	
Keith Mason	456-2889
Susan Brophy	456-6220
Chris Lin	456-6218

Message:

Mail Report

WELFARE REFORM MAIL REPORT: JUNE, 1994

How much mail:

- We received approximately 240 pieces of mail during June.
- Only 32 letters required responses; we are holding onto most of these letters until new form letters are approved.
- From the 32 letters, 5 responses will be drafted for Mary Jo Bane's signature, and 27 responses will be drafted for Patricia Sosa's signature.
- We received approximately 78 form letters and postcards against cutting aid to immigrants in order to finance welfare reform.
- 118 letters were part of a campaign urging the President and Secretary Shalala to listen to the recommendations of the Working Group and not cut back earlier proposed funding for child care for the working poor.
- We also received 12 postcards in favor of federalization of child support enforcement and child support assurance.

Who wrote to us?

Senator Lautenberg forwarded to Secretary Shalala a letter from New Jersey's Commissioner of Human Services, William Waldman, that asks the Senator to oppose any action to limit funds for emergency assistance as a part of welfare reform. Mayor Stephen Goldsmith of Indianapolis wrote to Mary Jo Bane, offering his assistance as the Administration proceeds in changing organizational culture as part of welfare reform. The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals wrote with their support of the President's proposal and with some suggestions (attached letter).

General opinions expressed through the mail:

The general mail this month has expressed some strong opinions. General opinions include:

- Do not cut benefits for immigrants and other poor people in order to finance welfare reform.
- Include funding for child care for working poor families in welfare reform.
- Curb the fraud and abuse throughout the current system.
- Impose time limits and work requirements for welfare recipients.
- Support the family cap and sterilization measures.
- Concentrate on making work pay for low-income women; welfare mothers have an easier life than working mothers.

Some letters are attached.



June 30, 1994

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Mary Jo Bane
Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Aerospace Building, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20447

WRWL

Dear Ms. Bane:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Association of Reproductive Health Professional's (ARHP) National Adolescent Reproductive Health Partnership with comments on the administration's proposed welfare reform legislation. In our view, the proposed legislation is exciting in concept and has the potential to contribute to our mission and to the prevention of unintended pregnancies in the United States.

ARHP is an interdisciplinary medical professional organization composed of obstetrician/gynecologists and other primary care physicians, nurse clinicians, physician assistants, researchers, educators, and other professionals in reproductive health. In 1993, ARHP launched the National Adolescent Reproductive Health Partnership as a key component of its National Program to Prevent Unintended Pregnancy.

The Initiative's vision is to make adolescent reproductive health a national priority. An important purpose of the Initiative is to enlist the support of private sector resources in partnership with the federal government in its activities in the area of adolescent reproductive health. The goal of the Initiative is three-fold: to identify ways in which public and private organizations can: 1) build partnerships to reduce the incidence of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease among teens; 2) facilitate dialogue between health care providers and adolescents; and 3) act as a liaison between clinicians and public policy makers.

On behalf of the Initiative, we offer the following observations and suggestions in the hope of further strengthening the legislation.

- Sec. 505, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Grants, focuses exclusively on implementing programs at the local level. While local programs are the heart of an effective program, we suggest also funding the states to provide essential support to local communities: e.g. supportive policy, teacher training programs, curricular guidance, and technical assistance. These are examples of state assistance that are essential to local success. Not only is this type of support needed locally, but it is more cost-efficient to support: for example, the training of teachers through



state-supported teacher training centers in lieu of funding multiple training efforts.

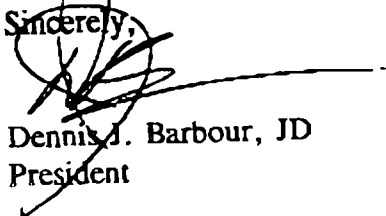
- Investigations of the literature and work in progress reveal that there have been relatively few successful teen pregnancy prevention programs that do not include the availability of services in addition to health education. However, Sec. 505 appears to support exclusively educational interventions. Therefore, it is especially important that adequate funding be provided so that education-only programs can be rigorously evaluated, keeping future dissemination to other communities in mind.
- The specificity relating to the programs and relationships incorporated into this draft of Sections 505 and 506 appears to be unusually detailed for public law. Generally, the broad principles of what is to be accomplished would be articulated in legislation, and the details would be subsequently specified by the executive branch in preparing requests for proposals once the legislation becomes law.
- In Section 508, Demonstration Projects to Provide Comprehensive Services to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy in High-Risk Communities, the proposed legislation calls for the design, implementation, and evaluation of demonstration projects in five to seven communities with populations of 20-35,000 residents. Communities of this size can be expected to produce approximately 100 teen pregnancies per year. The proposed amount of \$3.6 million per community for each of five years appears to be much more money than would be needed to implement and rigorously evaluate programs in small communities, even if the researchers opt for high-intensity, multi-faceted intervention programs over considerations for the long-term sustainability and replicability of the demonstration projects.
- While much can be learned from these demonstration efforts, we suggest that the bill needs to provide far more funding during the "out years" to support:
(1) dissemination mini-grants (i.e., limited time seed monies) that would stimulate many other local communities to learn from the experience of the demonstration projects and education-only communities in implementing their own programs, (2) technical assistance to be provided to the "dissemination" communities through the states and the Clearinghouse; and (3) the surveillance and evaluation of the extent and effectiveness of the dissemination efforts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention could play a crucial role in this effort by fulfilling the surveillance, training and dissemination functions.
- Page 75: Section 505 defines "adolescent" as ages 10 through 19 while Section 506 defines "adolescent" as 10 through 21. Both sections should use the same definition. We recommend the latter.
- Page 75: Eligible entity is a local education agency. The draft goes on to say "together with one or more community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, or public or private agencies or organizations." Local health departments

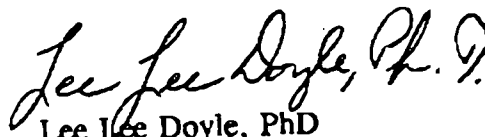
are not explicitly mentioned, but should be.

- Page 78: Although it is discussed in Section 506, the Section 505 should also encourage gainful employment for youth as a means of elevating self-esteem, giving youth a reason to hope for something more, etc. Both sections should emphasize the importance of working with local businesses and service/social organizations (public and private) to earmark real jobs that include training, promotion, and career potential. Communities may also want to consider "job-banks."
- Page 79: While implicitly stated in Section 505, we recommend that both Sections 505 and 506 explicitly direct grantees to seek local business, etc. investment in the program **FROM THE BEGINNING**. This improves the chances of sustainability, and equally important, **MAKES A STRONG STATEMENT OF HOW IMPORTANT THE YOUTH ARE TO THE COMMUNITY**, and that the community strongly supports waiting to have children.
- Page 80: Section (h) Priorities: (1) Increasing ration of non-Federal resources over time. While this will be heavily criticized by many because it may appear to put financially poorer communities at a disadvantage, it is extremely important. Even the poorest community can contribute substantially in-kind. Moreover, to make the program "theirs" (that is, belong to the community), local investment in an "institutionalizing" manner is key to sustainability.
- Page 82: Section (2), under Functions. The Clearinghouse should provide a specific type of training. It should train a nucleus of persons from each grantee community to train leaders in the community to: (1) build, manage, and nurture a community coalition in support of the program, and (2) work pro-actively with media and those involved in public relations with the community (i.e., health communications and social marketing). The Clearinghouse should consult with the CDC about successful training interventions.

On behalf of the National Adolescent Health Partnership, we applaud the administration's efforts on developing such a excellent piece of legislation. The costs associated with our nation's inability to address these issues are overwhelming. Together, the administration and the American public must address welfare reform before our nation is consumed with the overriding cost of human potential, in terms of economics, education, and the emotional lives of young people. We hope you will give thought to our concerns and we look forward to your reply. Please contact us at (202) 466-3825 if you require further assistance.

Sincerely,


Dennis J. Barbour, JD
President


Lee Lee Doyle, PhD
Chair

2227 Yorktown Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
May 12, 1994

Welfare Reform Working Group
Administration for Children and Families
370 L'Enfant Promenade SW, 6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20047

Dear Working Group Members,

I have followed with interest the various proposals for welfare reform presented by agencies, advocates, and legislators. My interest stems in part from my profession as a social worker, but the roots of this interest are in my own experience as a divorced single mother on AFDC. I would like to share my concerns and ideas from both perspectives.

I became a mother and got married when I was 17, during my senior year of high school. I quit school at the urging of the principal, stayed away one day, then re-enrolled. (In 1974, it took tremendous courage to go to school pregnant in the rural county in Pennsylvania where I grew up. I still wonder how I did it.)

The marriage failed quickly. By the time I was 19, I was alone with a young daughter for whom to care and no work experience. Though I eventually found minimum wage work, even then the service industry rarely allowed full-time employment for any one other than managers. With the help of AFDC, Earned Income Credit, Food Stamps and WIC, we managed to stay in sub-standard housing and eat.

I soon became dangerously depressed and sought help from a therapist at the Westmoreland County Community Mental Health Center. At her urging, I applied for and was accepted into college at a branch campus of the University of Pittsburgh, a public university. Because of the severe depression, I qualified for financial support from the state Department of Rehabilitation Services. Tuition, fees, and books were covered initially by BEOG/Pell grants, and later supplemented by merit-based scholarships including the University Scholar award. I held two work study jobs as well as part-time service work for the entire 4 years of my undergraduate education. Medicaid and a federally subsidized family planning program kept me and my daughter healthy and kept our family size small.

I graduated summa cum laude with a major in Psychology, and a minor in Business Administration in 1983. In 1989 I earned a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan.

It is not important here to note my personal accomplishments. What I want you to see in this story is the possibility of tragedy if there were no safety net. All of the programs I used (in bold type above) were absolutely necessary for me to do all of things I have done with my life. Remove any one of them and my life could have fallen apart. Many have already been removed, re-structured, or made inaccessible to current AFDC recipients. Have things gotten better for any one as a result?

Though I was directly assisted by government programs at varying levels for 7 years, I never felt "dependent". I felt valued and supported by my fellow citizens. I felt that my inherent worth and that of my child was being recognized.

Just what is this "dependence" argument about?

It is about shaming women.

It is about telling us to shut up, sit down and get out of the way.

It is about telling us that having children early is a sin and that raising them in poverty is the punishment for having a sexual life.

It is about hatred of women and fear that they won't freely choose to be with men; that they must be forced or coerced into staying with men.

If it is about dependence- it is the type that puts women in subservient roles to men. Without the welfare system women have been at the mercy of men to have the basics. With welfare women have a small slice of choice about whether or not to stay in dangerous or demeaning situations. Behind every argument about dependency is an argument that if women would just submit to the will of men there would be no need for welfare.

When I hear "dependence talk" I know I am hearing hate speech. No amount of parading "reformed welfare users" on the TV can convince me that the rhetoric about dependence is anything less than racist, sexist garbage. The women who participate in creating these promotions are being publicly shamed for being black, poor, under-educated, troubled or young. None of these attributes are cause for shame.

Shame comes from making choices we regret, combined with doubt about our self worth. I have no regrets. I could have plenty if I had refused the AFDC and joined the underground economy by engaging in prostitution, drug selling, or under-the-table employment. I had friends who made these choices. They worked for Mafia bosses or other criminals and were raped, forced to give "sexual favors" to friends of the boss, etc. Getting out was not easy for them once the choice was made to get in. They degraded themselves and their children in the process.

I could have attached myself to any available wage earning male, no matter the consequences for me or my child. I thank heaven that I had enough dignity left to be able to choose freely the man I eventually married. I did not need to marry out of dependence. I chose a life mate. Shouldn't every person have that choice- male female, rich, poor, black, white, young, old?

You know that AFDC is not expensive. It is not the cause of the federal deficit or the national debt. So why is it under attack now? For the very reasons that I am not ashamed to say I was an "AFDC mom". It is under attack because women are getting so uppity that they do not feel the need to marry men or stay married to men that do not treat them with respect. It is under attack because mothers are not interested in being subjected to the slavery of minimum wage, part-time earnings while their children are raised by others. It is under attack because poor women want the right to raise their own children just as other women want that right. AFDC is under attack because it has allowed women to become too INDEPENDENT.

What can be said of a society that will not respect mothers and children?

Shame on us if we continue this attack on poor women and poor children. Shame on you if you participate in this attack.

In my present job as the director of a federal grant for the education of homeless children (McKinney Act), and in my previous work in adolescent treatment, family planning, shelter programs, psychotherapy and school social work, as well as my volunteer work in shelters for families, I have seen hundreds of families who suffer the effects of poverty. I have yet to meet anyone who was "dependent on the system" and who wanted to stay there forever. All of the families I have encountered want to be able to have a decent life in a place that is safe for them and their children. They want to have partners who care for them and will not abuse them to control them. They want at least the minimum of what any of the rest of us want.

As a trained and practicing psychotherapist, I know that the last thing that will assist these families is more stress. So if you haven't paid any attention to my other arguments, please hear this. Any change you make must include real health care benefits, safe child care, and access to adequate food. If you cannot guarantee these basics needs, you will be committing murder to the minds, spirits, and perhaps bodies of a large segment of the population of poor folks.

Amazing things happen to people once they meet their physical need to survive. Miracles happen. There aren't very many miracles happening out there anymore.

Respectfully,

Valerie Mapstone Ackerman

Valerie Mapstone Ackerman, MSW