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A Guide to Charitable Choice

The Rules of Section 104 of the 1996 Federal Welfare Law Governing State Cooperation with Faith-based Social-Service Providers

The Center for Public Justice
Washington, DC

The Christian Legal Society's
Center for Law and Religious Freedom
Annandale, Virginia

E:CA

F: Charitable Choice

Jurisdiction	Jan. 1995	Aug. 1997	Pct. change
Anne Arundel	9,390	6,062	-35.4%
Calvert	1,575	911	-42.2
Charles	4,837	2,146	-55.6
Frederick	3,224	1,211	-62.4
Howard	2,843	1,194	-58.0
Montgomery	12,675	6,744	-46.8
Prince George's	32,447	25,105	-22.6
St. Mary's	2,938	1,373	-53.3

SOURCE: Maryland Department of Human Resources

USA TODAY – October 1, 1997, Wednesday, FIRST EDITION

Where welfare-to-work is working Michigan county has formula for success
BYLINE: Richard Wolf
DATELINE: OTTAWA COUNTY, Mich.

OTTAWA COUNTY, Mich. – It takes more than the church to turn welfare into work. And this county appears to have a winning combination.

If any county in America had a chance to put all its welfare recipients to work, Ottawa may have been it. It's unemployment rate is only 2.8%. And it has only five welfare recipients for every 1,000 residents, compared with 40 per 1,000 nationally.

Jobs are plentiful, particularly in furniture manufacturing, food processing and auto supplies. The heavily Dutch and German communities are infused with conservative values and a strong work ethic. Many of those on welfare are recent Hispanic and Asian immigrants who find work fast, even with language barriers.

For a brief moment, in fact, Ottawa had a unique claim: All 155 welfare recipients deemed able to work were working.

So tight is the labor market that Ken DeBoer, director of a Meijer superstore, which employs 700, trolls for employees at the county welfare office. He's hired 130 welfare recipients.

"The competition for workers around here is just incredible," says Steve Schaftenaar, who has hired six welfare recipients to work at his plastics packaging firm.

But what makes the county unusual are the lengths it will go, working with state funds, to get people off welfare and into the workforce:

– Job preparation is taken care of by Kandu Industries, which places most welfare clients before the end of their two-week, state-funded training program. Average starting salary: $ 6.32 an hour. Those who don't land jobs usually are put to work at Kandu, which runs vocational programs for the disabled.

– Child care, which trips up more welfare recipients than any other obstacle, is arranged and paid for by the state. Provisions are made to get clients to job interviews and to work when their children are sick. Barbara Clymer, a child care referral counselor, drops by a homeless shelter in the city of Holland to meet with welfare recipients.

– Transportation is arranged by a state contractor 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The program provides door-to-door service for workers, with stops at day-care centers. Money is available for car repairs and insurance. "We even paid off someone's traffic tickets," says county welfare director Loren Snippe.

All that help has produced a wealth of welfare-to-work success stories. Phuong Nguyen, 30, a refugee from Vietnam, landed a $ 7-an-hour job after two months in Holland. Patricia Miller, 36, who lost jobs at a grocery store and an auto repair shop, promptly found one as a taxi dispatcher.

Under welfare reform, "You can't sit around having babies," Miller says. "I like it better now. I'd rather be working."

USA TODAY -- October 1, 1997, Wednesday, FINAL EDITION

Law lets states increase churches' welfare role
BYLINE: Richard Wolf
DATELINE: HOLLAND, Mich.

HOLLAND, Mich. -- Maria Gonzalez thanks God for her move from welfare to work.

After a painful divorce, two out-of-wedlock births, a breakdown and homeless-ness, the 27-year-old mother of four found salvation in this idyllic, predominantly Dutch community through an increasingly common government ally: the church.

State officials met her earthly needs, such as day care and cab rides to work. But with kids ranging in age from 4 months to 9 years and a new second-shift job inspecting car windows, Gonzalez had emotional needs, too. So Ottawa County paired her with Jan Tuls, a mentor from Calvary Christian Reformed Church.

As the federal welfare reform law enters its second year today, a growing number of state and local governments are turning to neighborhood churches for help. The churches usually provide volunteer "mentors" -- church members who help those moving from elfare to work manage their daily lives. While in most cases no money goes to the churches, at least 10 states are spending tax dollars to run the mentoring programs.

Critics fear the result is a blurring of the traditional lines between church and state. In addition, they say it could lead to government-funded pressure on the poor to join religious groups. While no court challenges have been filed, groups that advocate the separation of church and state are keeping a watchful eye on the programs.

"Right now, we're walking a fine line," says Bill Raymond, director of Good Samaritan Industries, a non-profit ecumenical group that runs the Ottawa County program.

Last year's federal welfare reform law gives churches clear authority to run state-funded welfare programs. The only caveat: Tax dollars cannot be used for worship, religious instruction or proselytization. Anne Arundel County, Md., actually turns welfare checks over to churches to spend on behalf of clients.

Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., author of the law allowing the contracts, wants to let religious institutions run other federally funded programs in areas such as mental health, juvenile justice and drug rehabilitation.

"All over the country, you see church-based, faith-based efforts really making headway," says Jim Wallis, organizer of Call to Renewal, a religious and civic group. But, he warns, "I don't think the state should be funding religious activity."

In Ottawa County, for example, mentors from nearly 50 churches have helped more than 130 welfare recipients. But no one is forced to accept a mentor or attend religious services. The program does stress spirituality, though, and some clients have joined their mentor's church.

That worries opponents of the program, who fear churches will use state funds to sell a religious faith to poor, emotionally vulnerable families. So far, despite vows to fight the church-state union in court, they have not found such direct coercion.

"It is the nature of the church to be evangelical," says the Rev. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. But if state funds were used to subsidize any evangelical effort, he says, "that would cry out for a lawsuit."

While church affiliates such as Catholic Charities long have run human services programs, they are separate divisions of religious groups. The new law eliminates that requirement. But participation by welfare clients must be voluntary.

Before the law, the wall between church and state was crumbling. Several states were paying their own employees or non-profit groups to match churches and welfare clients. Some programs included a spiritual component, such as Bible study.

In Ottawa County, Good Samaritan Industries gets $ 100,000 in state funds to match welfare clients with mentors from among 250 churches. The Salvation Army, a Christian religious and charitable group, has a $ 375,000 state contract to do the same thing in Detroit and several other Michigan counties.

Southern states are most active. In Manchester, Tenn., Baptist and Methodist churches bus welfare clients and their children to church for mentoring sessions. State officials in Charlotte, N.C., plan to set up a desk in the welfare office lobby to refer clients to churches for mentoring.

Mississippi's Faith and Families program, which began in 1994, has paired 425 churches with 780 welfare clients. The program gets $ 200,000 in state funds. "We can provide the bread for the soul," says its director, the Rev. Ronald Moore. "The state can only provide bread for the body."

Texas' Family Pathfinders program was one of the first in the nation to pair welfare clients with church mentors. But Gov. George W. Bush wants to go further. He would give churches, as well as public and private agencies, the chance to compete for recipients' welfare checks.

To proponents of such programs, the churches are a Godsend. By "adopting" former welfare clients struggling to make it in the workplace, they help with the biggest obstacle to reducing welfare rolls – keeping former recipients in jobs.

"Government does a lot of things well, but dispensing compassion is not one of them," says Larry Temple, Texas' incoming welfare reform chief. "Churches do the best job of that."

But even within religious groups, there are concerns. Some worry that government funding will lead to regulation. Others fear that government, in effect, will pawn off on churches duties that have long been the responsibility of the state.

And not all those leaving welfare in Ottawa County like the religious aspect of the program. Tori Kaffenberger, 21, who recently began a $ 7.25-an-hour job as a nurse assistant, found the counseling useless and turned down further contact. Dale Ann Tiggelman, 28, who lives in a motel room with her three children, says her mentors "were just too much into my life."

But in many cases, mentoring has produced a heavenly friendship, like the one between Gonzalez and Tuls.

Sitting side by side in a sparsely furnished, rented house that Gonzalez shares with another family, the two gab like sisters. Religion is a minor part of their relationship; Gonzalez continues to attend her own Pentecostal church.

"Maria's background is so different than mine," says Tuls, 53, who has a solid marriage, three children and three grandchildren. "Yet emotionally, we're so much the same."

Says Gonzalez: "She's more of a mom to me than my own."

Los Angeles Times – October 1, 1997, Wednesday, Early Edition

CHILD SOCIAL WORKERS WALK OUT;
Labor: County Employees Go On Strike, Demanding A Pay Increase And A Reduction In Caseloads. The Board Of Supervisors Will Seek An Injunction To Force Them To Return.
BYLINE: JAMES RAINEY and JOSH MEYER, TIMES STAFF WRITERS