

## Research on the Impact of “Welfare Reform” on Child Maltreatment\*

- The national number and rate of *substantiated* cases of maltreatment have been declining over the last several years; 14.7 per thousand in 1995 to 11.8 per thousand in 1999.<sup>1</sup>
- The total number of children in foster care continues to grow; 483,000 in 1995<sup>2</sup> to 588,000 in 2000.<sup>3</sup>
- National data may not give a complete picture, effect may be masked by other trends:
  - Diversion from formal system to community providers
  - Strong economy
  - Federal time limits haven’t hit
  - Not a controlled experiment
- AFDC recipients in Chicago who incurred grant reductions without subsequent employment, **doubled their risk of involvement with child welfare**, compared to those who steadily received benefits and did not work.<sup>4</sup>
- State level data analysis suggests that as the share of single *working* mothers increases in a state, so do the rates of abuse and neglect.<sup>5</sup>
- State level data also suggests that states with more generous welfare benefits tend to have lower rates of substantiated neglect and out-of-home placements.<sup>6</sup>
- AFDC waiver participants in Delaware experienced substantiated maltreatment at a **rate 45% higher** than the controls. Results were driven by increased neglect, particularly among the most disadvantaged clients.<sup>7</sup>
- One finding of case studies (conducted in twelve states) suggests an increase in “lack of supervision” cases. Only one state could quantify the increase, but in that state the **increase was 150%**.<sup>8</sup>
- AFDC recipient mothers in Ohio who faced grant reductions and then worked were reunified with their children (who had been in foster care) **nine times more slowly** than those who received steady grants.<sup>9</sup>

For more information, contact: Rutledge Hutson (202) 906-8009; [rhutson@clasp.org](mailto:rhutson@clasp.org)

\* All of the research described in this fact sheet is explored in more detail in *Red Flags: Research Raises Concerns About the Impact of “Welfare Reform” on Child Maltreatment*, Rutledge Q. Hutson, October 2001, available online at <http://www.clasp.org>.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, *Ten Years of Reporting: Child Maltreatment 1999*, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, *1998 Green Book*.

<sup>3</sup> Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, *2000 Green Book*.

<sup>4</sup> Shook, K. *Does the Loss of Welfare Income Increase the Risk of Involvement with the Child Welfare System?*, **Children and Youth Services Review**, Vol. 21, Nos. 9-10, pp. 781-814, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Paxson, C. and Waldfogel, J., *Welfare Reforms, Family Resources, and Child Maltreatment in The Incentives of Government Programs and the Well-Being of Families*, 2001 available from Joint Center for Poverty Research at: <http://www.icpr.org/book/> and Paxson, C. and Waldfogel, J. *Work, Welfare and Child Maltreatment*, **Journal of Labor Economics**, in press.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Fein, D.J. & Lee, W. S., *The ABC Evaluation: Impacts of Welfare Reform on Child Maltreatment*, Abt Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, available at <http://www.abtassoc.com>, forthcoming in **Children and Youth Services Review**.

<sup>8</sup> Geen, R., Fender, L., Leos-Urbel, J. and Markowitz, T., *Welfare Reform's Effect on Child Welfare Caseloads*, February 2001, available from The Urban Institute at: <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/discussion01-04.html>

<sup>9</sup> Wells, K. and Guo, S., *The Impact of Welfare Reform on Foster Care and Child Welfare: A Case Study Reunification of Foster Children in the First Entry Cohort*, **Children and Youth Services Review**, in press.