



Pergamon

Children and Youth Services Review, Vol. 21, Nos. 9/10, pp. 881-900, 1999  
Copyright © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd  
Printed in the USA. All rights reserved  
0190-7409/99/\$-see front matter

PII S0190-7409(99)00058-4

# Welfare Reform and High School Dropout Patterns for Children

**Dennis K. Orthner**

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Karen A. Randolph**

State University of New York at Buffalo

This study examines the impact of parental work and continuity of welfare receipt on the drop out rates of high school students in families in poverty. The risk of dropping out from school is examined in light of potential effects on subsequent social and economic well-being. The data indicate that drop out rates have increased over the past decade for children on public assistance, but that consistency in parental employment and transitions off welfare are associated with lower rates of dropping out of high school. The results are discussed in terms of their implications for preventative strategies that might be employed by child welfare and school social workers.

Some of the most dramatic changes in welfare policy over the past several decades have occurred in the 1990s. Most notably, the passage in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193) changed the underlying assumption of cash assistance from that of an entitlement to that of a time limited benefit. This change magnified policy maker's demands that welfare cash assistance become temporary and that paid employment become the primary basis for economic security, assumptions earlier developed under the Work Incentives Now (WIN) and the Family Support Act initiatives. Not only did this change the eligibility and work requirements for parents receiving assistance, but it also focused attention on the economic security of the two-thirds of welfare recipients who are children (Bane & Ellwood, 1994).

Welfare reform, especially as reflected in the provisions associated with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), has had two major effects on adult participants: the requirement of finding work in a rela-

This research was funded by contracts with the N.C. State Department of Health and Human Services.

Request for reprints should be sent to Dennis K. Orthner, Jordan Institute for Families, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550.

tively short period of time and the limitation of cash assistance to no more than five years. For these adults, economic activity dramatically shifts from maintaining entitlements for continued cash assistance to finding employment, often in industries with low wages and benefits. Greater emphasis on providing childcare and enforcing child support orders increases the incentives for employment. An underlining but largely unstated assumption of welfare reform is that children in these families will increase their own economic activity, largely in the form of greater investments in school performance and staying in school in order to improve their own economic opportunities in adulthood.

One fear among those who have observed this dramatic change in public assistance is that of increased child welfare involvement among families in poverty. It cannot be assumed that pressuring single parents on welfare to find employment will have no harm or only beneficial consequences for children. Significant concerns have been raised over the longer-term effects of welfare reform on incidents of child maltreatment, especially if new work requirements, time-limited benefits and TANF sanctions increase child poverty (Geen & Waters, 1997). Since child neglect has a close tie to child poverty, we might assume with Shook and Testa that "states will be hard-pressed to defend the distinction between child dependency and child neglect" (1997, p. 7).

One consequence of this potential link between parent employment and the welfare of children is growing interest in not just protecting children from maltreatment but strengthening their abilities to cope with and adapt to the economic demands of society. It can be argued that children who are not encouraged or prepared for the economic and social requirements of a modern society suffer a chronic form of neglect that can cause long-term harm to them and others in their relationships (Gill, 1975). This concern for strengthening the broader interest in the welfare of children is reflected in Lindsey's call to a broader mission for child welfare:

Children living in poverty in a nation of great material abundance suffer from abuse. It may be a less acute form of abuse; rather, it is a form of chronic abuse. Yet, it is the corrosive and indifferent character of this chronic abuse that makes it so difficult to endure. The brutality of severe physical abuse and the horror and betrayal of sexual assault of children are easily recognized, but too often we acquiesce to the inequity and unfairness of a situation where children, because of the life of poverty they were born into, are denied the basic eco-

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات