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WV WORKS 2000: The Recipients' Perspective

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The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 redefined social welfare policy in the United States. The new law purposively “delinked” eligibility for welfare (cash assistance) from other government safety net programs, including Medicaid and food stamps. It did this, in large part, by doing away with the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program that had been in existence for decades, and replacing it with a new cash assistance program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Underlying the welfare reform effort was an assumption that the program's original purposes – providing subsistence income to those who were generally viewed as being victims of either unfortunate circumstances (such as the death of a spouse or the family's abandonment by the primary bread-winner) or other forces largely beyond the recipient's control (such as racial discrimination, a national recession or a weak local economy, mental or health problems, etc.) – were either no longer relevant, or were not being achieved under existing program arrangements. Importantly, recipients are no longer generally viewed as victims. Instead, they are generally viewed as being responsible for their own circumstances and, therefore, responsible for changing them. To end what some commentators have called the enduring culture of welfare dependency, the law encourages recipients to “change their ways.”

The National Government's Four Goals

The increased emphasis on personal responsibility and behavior change is reflected in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996's four goals:

- to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births;
- to reduce single-parent child-rearing; and
- to reduce welfare dependency (Federal Register 1999).

The first goal was to be met through the creation of the \$1 billion annual Child Care and Development Block Grant. The second goal was to be met by providing states “bonus” money for devising programs that reduced the number of out-of-wedlock births that occurred in that state. The third goal was to be accomplished by requiring recipients to cooperate with state child support enforcement agencies. The fourth goal was to be accomplished by replacing the Aid to Families With Dependent Children and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training programs with the state-centered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF).

TANF was designed to end welfare dependency by imposing mandatory work requirements and lifetime benefit limits for recipients, and mandatory work participation rates and maintenance of effort requirements for states. Specifically, most recipients are now required to work after they have received cash assistance for 24 months. In addition,

states must demonstrate that ever-increasing proportions of their adult TANF recipients are engaged in a work activity. In FY 2001, the overall minimum participation rate is 45 percent (90 percent for households with two parents present). The overall minimum percentage increases to 50 percent in FY 2002. States that fail to meet the mandatory work participation rates are subject to the forfeiture of 5 percent of their federal TANF funds during the first year of noncompliance, and an additional 2 percent of funding for each consecutive year they continue in noncompliance, up to a maximum of 21 percent of their federal TANF funding (National Conference of State Legislatures 1997). So far, West Virginia has met the overall minimum participation rate requirement, but, like some other states, has not been able to meet the 90 percent threshold for two-parent families.

Under the work requirements, single parents must be engaged in a work activity for at least 30 hours per week. Depending on family circumstances, married couples must work a combined 35 to 55 hours per week. Single parents with children under age one and single parents with a child under age six who cannot find child care are exempt from the work requirement. If a nonexempt recipient refuses to participate in a work activity they can be sanctioned by having their benefits reduced and, eventually, terminated. The work requirement can be met through either unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, up to 12 months of vocational training, providing child care services to individuals who are participating in community service, and up to six weeks of job search (DHHS 2000b).

TANF also limits cash assistance to a maximum of five cumulative years. States can impose shorter time limits and exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from the time limit.

States are required to continue to spend at least 80 percent of what they spent on Aid to Families with Dependent Children and related programs in FY 1994 in order to receive their full allotment of TANF funds. That threshold is reduced to 75 percent if they meet their work requirements. States must also maintain spending at 100 percent of FY 1994 levels to access a \$2 billion contingency fund designed to assist states affected by high population growth or economic downturn. In addition, they must maintain 100 percent of FY 1994 or FY 1995 spending on child care (whichever is greater) to access additional child care funds beyond their initial TANF allotment (DHHS 2000b).

West Virginia's Response to Welfare Reform

When the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 was passed, West Virginia already had a welfare reform plan in development. Called WV WORKS, West Virginia's program was implemented on a county-by-county basis through the latter part of 1997. By early 1998, WV WORKS was operating across the state. The program's initial emphasis was on providing individuals the means to leave welfare. This was done by promoting work, pursuing child support payments, and providing edu-

cation and training to those in need of job skills. Like many states, West Virginia's WV WORKS program was essentially designed to be a "work first" program. In recent months, the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has recognized that additional efforts are needed to serve those who are least likely to leave the rolls and to assist those who are making an effort to stay off of TANF. The state has also added resources to assist children in low-income families.

Those who remain on TANF for a long time often face serious challenges. Because of this, the state has invested in new programs, such as the "In Service to West Virginia" program, to provide work experiences in public service and work projects for those who have used up most of their TANF eligibility. The state has also increased the average monthly cash assistance check by \$200 over the past 18 months to make it easier for recipients to make ends meet while on WV WORKS. The state is also investigating ways to provide exemptions for those who are likely to exhaust their TANF time limits, but who will not be able to make the transition to employment or economic independence (DHHR 2000a, 2000b).

The state has also invested additional resources in supportive services to assist individuals transition off welfare. For those who qualify, the state provides money for clothing, car repairs, relocation, tools and equipment, transportation, and other needs. The state has also raised its monthly "income disregard" from 40 to 60 percent to ease the challenges of transition. For those who find themselves in financial crisis, the state is offering more generous diversion payments that will not count against an individual's TANF time limits. The state has also committed resources to helping those on TANF pursue post-secondary education by creating a special state-funded higher education program. New state legislation has also redefined what is considered acceptable work activities, making it easier to substitute education for these activities.

Because two out of three TANF recipients are children, and because parents face many challenges in caring for their children while working, the state has focused on services that benefit children. For example, the state obligated \$22 million of its TANF funds to its Child Development Block Grant and over \$28 million to Child Welfare and Social Service Programs in FY 2000 (DHHR 2000). Recently, the state has also awarded substantial sums to governmental and nongovernmental organizations for truancy diversion, adolescent education programs that focus on preventing risky behaviors, parenting classes, and other initiatives.

TANF Caseloads Fall Dramatically

TANF's work requirements and other provisions had an immediate and dramatic impact on caseloads across the nation. Nationally, enrollments fell from 11.4 million in January 1997 to 9.1 million in January 1998. Enrollments then continued to decline, falling to 6.2 million in January 2000. The reductions were even more dramatic in West Virginia. In January 1997, there were 98,690 West Virginians on welfare. By January 1998, that number had been cut almost in half, to 51,348. By January 2000 there were 28,850 West Virginians receiving cash assistance under WV WORKS (DHHS 2000b).

Initially, the dramatic drop in TANF enrollment across the nation, and in West Virginia, was viewed by most policymakers as an indication that welfare reform was working. The reductions, it seemed, clearly indicated that the new law was meeting its stated goal of stemming the rising tide of welfare dependency. At first, most commentators assumed that TANF enrollments were declining because the national economy was booming and jobs, especially entry-level jobs, were relatively plentiful. However, a closer examination of the statistics provided by state welfare agencies revealed that, nationwide, less than half of the recipients who left the welfare rolls were finding jobs (Fischer 1998; WV WORKS 1998).

WV WORKS Case Closure Study

Policymakers across the nation, and in West Virginia, began to ask the same question: what was happening to these people? In an effort to answer this, and other questions, West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources funded an interdisciplinary faculty research team assembled by West Virginia University's Institute for Public Affairs to design, administer, and interpret a comprehensive statewide survey of WV WORKS recipients whose cases were closed during 1999. To date, only 17 other states have completed such studies, making West Virginia a leader in this research area. The survey results "WV WORKS Case Closure Study" were released in December 1999, and can be read on-line (and downloaded for free) at "http://www.polsci.wvu.edu/ipa/par/Report17_1.pdf" (Dilger et. al, 1999). It provided information concerning why the cases were closed, a profile of the respondents' economic and social well-being, an indication of how welfare reform has affected their behavior and prospects for economic self-sufficiency, and an assessment of their experiences with the Department's programs.

WV WORKS 2000: The Recipients' Perspective

As the next logical step, West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources provided additional funding to the interdisciplinary research team to survey current WV WORKS recipients. Specifically, the survey was designed to provide DHHR with the respondents':

- Assessment of their experiences with WV WORKS, DHHR's personnel and services, and other government assistance programs;
- Information concerning their work experiences, job readiness, and employment goals;
- Their assessment of their experiences with vocational, educational, and job training programs;
- Information concerning their child care needs and arrangements, and their assessment of what should be done to meet those needs;
- A profile of their current economic and social well-being;
- An indication of how welfare reform has affected their behavior and their prospects for economic self-sufficiency;
- Information concerning their knowledge of WV WORKS' rules and regulations, and of governmental programs available to assist them; and

- Their assessment of what the state should do to improve their social and economic well-being, including recommended changes to WV WORKS.

It is important to note that the Department developed and implemented a variety of new support services for WV WORKS recipients in 2000. The full impact of these services (for example, adult pre-employment vision services, adult pre-employment dental care, and transportation for participation in required activities) as well as recent increases in cash assistance payments had yet to be felt when this survey was conducted. As a result, some of the needs identified in this survey are currently being addressed. Details concerning these new initiatives can be found in the Department's WV WORKS Annual Report (DHHR 2000a). The Annual Report is available on-line at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/ofs/2000AnnualReport.htm>.

It is also important to note that this report focuses on the experiences and needs of WV WORKS adult recipients. Approximately one-third of all WV WORKS cases are child only cases. Child only cases were purposively excluded from the analysis, primarily because they are provided special protections by both federal law and state statute, and because the intent of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 was to change the behavior of adult recipients.

Survey Design

The survey was designed in consultation with officials in West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources. Because the response rate for mailed surveys is typically low, especially for survey populations with limited formal education and/or income, respondents were offered \$15 to complete the survey.

The use of telephone surveys and face-to-face interviews to either replace or supplement the information provided by the mailed survey was considered. A telephone survey was precluded by state confidentiality rules. Moreover, 43 percent of the respondents to the mailed survey indicated that they did not have access to a working telephone, raising serious validity and reliability questions for the use of telephone surveys for this population group. A face-to-face survey was precluded by cost and time limitations and by state confidentiality rules.

Open-Ended Questions

In an effort to supplement the quantitative nature of the survey questions, the survey included several open-ended questions. For example, working respondents were asked what they felt were the benefits of working, the drawbacks of working, the challenges they have faced while working, and to recommend actions to help them overcome these challenges. In addition, all of the respondents were asked to comment on their experiences with WV WORKS and to offer recommendations for change. Their written comments are summarized later in this article.

Survey Sample Size

West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources randomly generated mailing labels for 2,100 WV WORKS adult recipients in June 2000. The initial mailing of

the surveys took place in July 2000. A second, follow-up mailing took place in early August 2000. Respondents were given until August 25, 2000 to complete and return the surveys.

A total of 1,206 surveys were completed and returned, for a response rate of 57.4 percent. This is considered an exceptional response rate for mailed surveys to low-income populations (Nachmias and Nachmias 1987). Samples of this size (1,206 responses from a total population of 8,307 adult recipients) have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent for each question. Also, because the sample was drawn scientifically the sample should provide (within a 95 percent confidence interval) an accurate representation of the experiences of WV WORKS adults (Manheim and Rich 1986).

Survey Representativeness

The sample's demographic characteristics were compared with the demographic characteristics of WV WORKS adult recipients in 2000 (or 1999 if 2000 data were not available) to make certain that it was truly representative of the survey population. The sample was similar to the population of all WV WORKS adults in 2000 in all respects:

- The county-by-county distribution of survey responses was similar to the actual county-by-county distribution of WV WORKS adult recipients in 2000. All 55 counties are represented in the sample, with the largest number of respondents residing in McDowell (122), Cabell (69), and Kanawha (65) counties;
- The gender of the respondents was similar to the gender of WV WORKS adult recipients (86.6 percent of the respondents were women and 13.4 percent were men. In 2000, 80 percent of WV WORKS adult recipients were women, and 20 percent were men);
- The age distribution of the respondents was similar to the age distribution of WV WORKS adult recipients



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(81.8 percent of the respondents were in their twenties or thirties, with an average age of 31. In 1999, 76.1 percent of WV WORKS adult recipients were in their twenties or thirties) (DHHS 2000c);

- The ethnicity of the respondents was similar to the ethnicity of WV WORKS adult recipients (90.3 percent of the respondents were White/Caucasian, 7.7 percent were African-American, 0.7 percent were Native American, 0.2 percent were Hispanic, 0.2 percent were Asian, and 0.9 percent reported “other.” In 1999, 91.4 percent of WV WORKS adult recipients were White/Caucasian, 7.4 percent were African-American, 0.1 percent were Native-American, 0.2 percent were Hispanic, 0.1 percent were Asian, and 0.8 reported “other”) (DHHS 2000c).
- The marital status of the respondents was similar to the marital status of WV WORKS adult recipients (30.6 percent of the respondents were single, 30.1 percent were married, 25.4 percent were divorced, 13.2 percent were separated, and 0.8 percent were widowed). In 1999, 35 percent of WV WORKS adult recipients were single, 35.5 percent were married, 15.9 percent were divorced, 12.2 percent were separated, 1.1 percent were widowed, and 0.2 were unknown) (DHHS 2000c).

The similarity between the sample and the population demographics supports the conclusion that the survey sample is truly representative of the survey population.

Respondent Profile

The survey included a series of questions designed to provide a profile of the respondents. As mentioned previously, most of the respondents were white women in their twenties or thirties. Also:

- Most of the respondents (70.2 percent) had either one (32 percent) or two children (38.2 percent) in their household;
- Almost four out of every ten respondents had not completed high school or received a GED (39.6 percent);
- About one-quarter of the respondents (26.2 percent) were employed in subsidized or unsubsidized positions or engaged in the Department’s JOIN or CWEP programs. The median wage of working respondents was \$5.32 an hour. Their median monthly income was \$500;
- Most of the respondents (65.1 percent) reported that they had a total annual household income of \$5,000 or less in 1999, and nearly all of the respondents (91.1 percent) reported that they had a total annual household income of \$10,000 or less in 1999;
- 8.9 percent of the respondents reported that they earned more than \$10,000 in 1999. Only about one-quarter of those respondents (26.3 percent) reported that they had taken advantage of the federal earned income tax credit;
- More than half of the respondents (56.2 percent) expected to have a total annual household income of \$5,000 or less in 2000, and most (88.9 percent) expected to have a total annual household income of \$10,000 or less in 2000;

- In addition to receiving WV WORKS benefits, 91.5 percent of the respondents reported that they received food stamps and 87.4 percent reported that they were enrolled in Medicaid;
- Most of the respondents (78.3 percent) reported that they had applied for and received WV WORKS more than once, with 21.7 percent applying and receiving benefits only once, 29.6 percent twice, 17 percent three times, and 31.7 percent more than three times;
- More than half of the respondents (52.7 percent) had received WV WORKS benefits for fewer than three years;
- More than half of the respondents (55.7 percent) had left WV WORKS and returned to the program over the past 12 months;
- Although DHHR provides them with the information, most of the respondents (71 percent) reported that they did not know how many months of WV WORKS/TANF eligibility they had remaining;
- More than four out of every ten respondents (43.3 percent) reported that they did not have access to a working telephone;
- About one-fifth of the respondents (20.7 percent) reported that they resided in a city or suburb, 44 percent reported that they resided in a small town, and 35.3 percent reported that they resided in a rural or very rural area; and
- About one-fifth of the respondents (21.7 percent) reported that they resided in the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources’ region 1 (north-central West Virginia), about one-third (31.7 percent) reported that they resided in region 2 (southwestern West Virginia), 12.7 percent reported that they resided in region 3 (northeastern West Virginia), about one-third (33.9 percent) reported that they resided in region 4 (southeastern West Virginia), and 1.1 percent did not indicate where they resided.

Current economic and social well-being

All of the respondents were asked a series of questions that were designed to provide an assessment of their current economic and social well-being. Specifically, they were asked questions concerning their employment, household income, life experiences, their personal assessment of their current economic and social well-being, and how they view their future.

Employment and Income

About one-quarter of the respondents (26.2 percent) were working when they completed the survey. The median wage of working respondents was \$5.32 an hour (the average wage was \$5.43 an hour). Their median monthly income was \$500 (the average monthly income was \$534.28 per month).

About half of the working respondents (49.8 percent) were employed on a part-time basis (defined as less than 30 hours a week) and half (50.2 percent) were employed on a full-time basis. Of those working, most (85.8 percent) had been working in their current job for a year or less, and most did not have paid vacation or personal days (73.1 percent), paid

sick leave (85.9 percent), paid holidays (77.2 percent), health benefits paid either in full or in part by their employer (85.2 percent), or a retirement plan (85.8 percent).

As Table 1 indicates, nearly all (91.1 percent of those responding to the question) reported that their annual household income was \$10,000 or less in 1999. More than half of the respondents (65.1 percent) had a total annual household income of less than \$5,000 in 1999, and 26 percent had a total annual household income of \$5,000 to \$10,000 in 1999. When asked to estimate what their total annual household income would be in 2000, nearly all of the respondents (88.9 percent) indicated either less than \$5,000 (56.2 percent) or \$5,000 to \$10,000 (32.7 percent).

Respondent's Annual Household Income (1999)	
Amount	Percent of All Respondents
Less than \$5,000	65.1%
\$5,000 - \$10,000	26.0%
\$10,001 - \$15,000	6.4%
\$15,001 - \$20,000	1.3%
\$20,001 - \$25,000	.6%
More than \$25,000	.6%
N = 1,081	

Other Benefits

Working respondents were provided a list of benefits. They were then asked to answer "yes" if anyone in their home currently received the specific benefit listed, and "no" if no one in their home currently received the specific benefit. Because respondents were allowed to answer or skip each listed benefit, the number of responses to each benefit varied from a low of 1,156 (workers' compensation) to a high of 1,189 (veteran's benefits).

As Table 2 indicates, the most frequently cited benefits were food stamps (91.5 percent of those responding to the question), Medicaid/medical card (87.4 percent), free or reduced price school meals (62 percent), and school clothing vouchers (59.5 percent). Other frequently mentioned services included the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program (34.7 percent), the Low Income Energy Assistance program (LEAP) (31.8 percent), housing assistance (25.6 percent), Welfare-to-Work job training (24.0 percent), Supplemental Security Income (20.8 percent), and child support (20.6 percent). Due to the list's length, only those benefits that were cited by at least one percent of the respondents are included.

When interpreting the data presented on Table 2, it is important to remember that it reflects the distribution of services among all WV WORKS recipients, and has not been adjusted to account for differences in the various programs' eligibility standards. Therefore, the fact that Table 2, for example, indicates that more than one-third of the respondents reported that they did not receive reduced-price school meals and school clothing vouchers should not be interpreted to mean that those programs are not reaching their intended audiences. Those percentages reflect the recipients' demographic characteristics and are not necessarily a result of a program implementation problem.

Does anyone in your home currently receive any benefits from these programs?	
Program	Percentage*
Food stamps	91.5%
Medicaid/medical card	87.4%
Free or reduced price school meals	62.0%
School clothing voucher	59.5%
Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program	34.7%
Low Income Energy Assistance program (LEAP)	31.8%
Housing assistance	25.6%
Welfare-to-Work job training	24.0%
Supplemental Security Income	20.8%
Child support	20.6%
State transportation assistance	16.3%
Supportive Services	15.9%
DHHR emergency assistance	13.6%
Food pantry	13.5%
Mental health services	13.0%
Head Start	10.8%
Federal Earned Income Tax Credit program	10.1%
State child care payment	9.9%
Free health clinics	7.8%
Job training	7.4%
Free dental clinics	6.5%
Family planning	6.2%
Assistance from church	4.9%
Child care assistance (other than from the state)	4.8%
Salvation Army	4.7%
Education grants	3.6%
Summer Food Service (Energy Express)	3.1%
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	3.0%
Employment Disability	2.5%
Relocation assistance	2.5%
Adult Basic Education	2.3%
Job Corps	1.7%
N = 1,156 to 1,189	
*Table 2 reflects the distribution of services among all WV WORKS recipients and has not been adjusted to account for difference in the various program's eligibility standards.	

Life Experiences

Respondents were provided two lists of life circumstances. They were then asked to answer "yes" if there was ever a time that the specific life circumstance happened to them while they were receiving cash assistance and "no" if the specific life circumstance had not happened to them while they were receiving cash assistance. Because respondents were allowed to answer or skip each specific life circumstance, the number of responses to each life circumstance varied from 1,169 to 1,174.

The survey results suggest that DHHR's efforts to increase cash assistance payments and to offer a pre-employment dental and vision program were needed as more than half of the respondents reported that while receiving monthly cash assistance they had experienced times when they did not have enough money to get glasses (55.6 percent of those answering the question), buy food (52.9 percent), buy medicine (52 percent), and go to the dentist (51.1 percent). Also, as shown on Table 3, 46.3 percent reported that they had experienced times while receiving cash assistance when they did not have enough money to pay the rent, and 34.5 percent reported that they did not have enough money to go to the doctor.

About one in every five respondents (20.6 percent of those answering the question) also reported that while receiving

monthly cash assistance they had experienced times when they went without heat and about one in every five (20.6 percent) had experienced times when they had gone without water. In addition, 32.7 percent of the respondents reported that while receiving monthly cash assistance they had taken odd jobs to bring in more money, 17.1 percent had moved in with someone else to share expenses, and 13.8 percent had moved to find work.

A statistical analysis of the data revealed that those over 30 years old were more likely than those under 30 to have had times when they did not have enough money to get glasses, buy food, go to the dentist, and pay the rent. Those who had applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times in their lives were more likely those who had applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times in their lives to have had times when they did not have enough money to get glasses, go to the dentist, pay the rent, and go to the doctor. Also, those reporting that they lived in rural or very rural areas were more likely than those reporting that they lived in cities/suburbs or towns to report that they have had times when they did not have enough money to go to the doctor.

Table 3	
While receiving monthly cash assistance, have you had times when you did not have enough money to:	
Life Circumstance	Percentage
Get glasses	55.6%
Buy food	52.9%
Buy medicine	52.0%
Go to the dentist	51.1%
Pay the rent	46.3%
Go to the doctor	34.5%
N = 1,169 to 1,174	

Personal Assessments

Respondents were asked to assess their personal and financial futures, and the future for their children. As Table 4 shows, relatively few of the respondents viewed their personal future as being either good (19.2 percent of those answering the question) or excellent (6.4 percent). Instead, most of them reported that their personal future looks fair (38.8 percent), poor (23.7 percent), or very poor (12 percent).

Respondents over the age of 30, those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times in their lives, and those who do not have a GED or high school degree were more likely than others to report that their personal futures were poor or very poor.

Table 4	
Personally, do you think your future looks...	
Assessment	Percentage
Excellent	6.4%
Good	19.2%
Fair	38.8%
Poor	23.7%
Very poor	12.0%
N = 1,169	

Respondents had a similar response concerning their financial futures. Relatively few of the respondents viewed their financial future as being excellent (2.8 percent of those answering the question) or good (12.8 percent). Most of the respondents reported that their financial future was either fair (35.2 percent), poor (31.3 percent), or very poor (17.9 percent).

Women, respondents over the age of 30, those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times in their lives, and those from rural areas were more likely than others to report that their personal futures were poor or very poor.

Respondents were somewhat more optimistic concerning their children's future. About half (50.1 percent) of the respondents answering the question reported that they viewed their children's future as either excellent (27.6 percent) or good (28.9 percent), and about half (49.9 percent) indicated either fair (31.4 percent), poor (13.7 percent), or very poor (4.8 percent).

Respondents under age 30, those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times in their lives, and those living in a city or town were more likely than others to report that their children's future looks good or excellent.

The respondents' relatively positive views concerning their children's future were also evident in their responses to the statement: "I have total confidence in my ability to provide for my family in the future." Most of the respondents to this question (56.5 percent) either strongly agreed (27.6 percent) or agreed (28.9 percent) with this statement, 33 percent were not sure, 6.4 percent disagreed, and 4.1 percent strongly disagreed. Women, respondents under age 30, those living in cities or towns, and those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times in their lives were more likely than others to have a positive view of their ability to provide for their families in the future. Respondents were also asked if they thought they would be on WV WORKS next year. Almost two-thirds (64.4 percent of those answering the question) said no. Respondents under age 30 and those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times in their lives were more likely than others to report that they thought that they would not be on WV WORKS next year.

Employment Barriers

Respondents were presented a list of personal circumstances. They were then asked to answer "yes" if they felt that it was difficult to find a job because of the personal circumstance and "no" if they did not feel that it was difficult to find a job because of the personal circumstance. Because respondents were allowed to answer or skip each personal circumstance the number of responses to each personal circumstance varied from 1,144 to 1,146.

As Table 5 shows, the most frequently cited employment barriers were the lack of nice clothes (44.8 percent of those answering the question), finding transportation (43.3 percent), finding child care (32.8 percent), and bad teeth (21.5 percent).

Women were more likely than men to find it difficult to find a job because they don't have nice clothes, cannot find child care, are overweight, or look too young. Men were more likely than women to find it difficult to find a job because they have

a physical disability and look too old. Also, respondents over age 30 were more likely than younger respondents to find it difficult to find a job because they have bad teeth, a physical disability, or look too old. Those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times in their lives were more likely those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times in their lives to find it difficult to find a job because they don't have nice clothes, cannot find transportation, have bad teeth, are female, cannot see well, and cannot speak English well. In addition, while only 5.1 percent of the respondents to this question indicated they had difficulty finding a job because they are a person of color, more than half of the black/African-American respondents answering this question (52.9 percent) reported being a person of color made it difficult for them to find a job.

Table 5

Did you feel that it was difficult to find a job because you...

Personal Circumstance	Percentage
Don't have nice clothes	44.8%
Cannot find transportation	43.3%
Cannot find child care	32.8%
Have bad teeth	21.5%
Have a physical disability	20.9%
Are overweight	17.7%
Are female	16.8%
Cannot see well	13.3%
Look too young	6.3%
Look too old	6.3%
Are a person of color	5.1%
Do not want to work	3.4%
Cannot speak English well	1.8%
Are male	1.6%

N = 1,144 to 1,146

Unemployed Respondents

Most of the respondents (73.8 percent) were not employed or participating in CWEP or JOIN when they completed the survey. These respondents were asked a series of questions designed to determine why they were not employed and what could be done to improve their employment prospects.

Most (61.9 percent of the unemployed respondents who answered this question) reported that they had been unemployed for less than three years since their last job (26 percent were unemployed for less than six months, 17.5 percent were unemployed six months to a year, and 18.4 percent were unemployed between one and three years). Another 10.7 percent of the unemployed respondents were unemployed from three to five years, 17.9 percent were unemployed for more than five years, and 9.6 percent of the unemployed respondents had never been employed.

Men were more likely than women to be unemployed for long periods of time (for at least one year). Women were more likely than men to have never been employed. Unemployed respondents over the age of 30, those living in rural areas, and those residing in one of West Virginia's 26 economically distressed counties (defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission as having more than 150 percent of the national average unemployment rate and less than two-thirds of the national average per capita income over the most recent three-year period – located primarily in cen-

tral and southern West Virginia) were more likely to be unemployed for longer periods of time than unemployed respondents who were under the age of 30, those living in a town or city, and those not residing in an economically distressed county.

Perceived Employment Barriers

Unemployed respondents were provided a list of reasons that could help to explain why they currently do not have a job. They were then asked to answer "yes" if they felt that it was difficult to find a job because of the reason listed and "no" if they did not feel that it was difficult to find a job because of the reason listed.

As Table 6 indicates, the most frequently cited reason for not working (48.4 percent of unemployed respondents who answered the question) was problems with transportation. The next most cited reasons were physical or mental illness or disability problems (39.7 percent), child care problems (38.4 percent), and the job market is bad (37.7 percent).

Men were more likely than women to report transportation as being a reason for not working. Men and respondents over age 30 were more likely than others to report that a physical or mental illness or disability prevented their employment. Women, those under age 30, and those residing in rural areas were more likely than others to cite child care as an employment barrier. Respondents with at least a GED or high school degree and those over 30 years old were more likely than others to mention a bad job market as a reason for not working. Respondents lacking a GED or high school degree and those under age 30 were more likely than others to cite the lack of skills, experience, or education, and losing benefits if working as employment barriers. Women were more likely than men to report that they would rather stay at home with children.

Table 6

Do any of the following reasons help to explain why you don't have a job? (Unemployed Respondents only)

Reason	Percentage
Transportation problems	48.4%
Physical or mental illness or disability problems	39.7%
Child care problems	38.4%
The job market is bad	37.7%
Don't have skills/experience/education	35.9%
I would rather stay at home with my children	28.6%
I would lose benefits if working	15.8%
Currently or recently pregnant	10.1%
Receiving child support payments	5.3%
Don't want to work	3.8%
In an abusive relationship	2.6%
Drug/alcohol problem	1.3%

N = 547

note: percentages exceed 100 percent because the respondents were allowed to provide more than one reason for not having a job.

Unemployed respondents were also asked the following open-ended question: "What is the single most important reason you are not working?" The most frequently cited response was their health (17.9 percent of those responding to the question), followed by transportation problems (14.7 percent), the job market (no jobs, jobs don't pay well enough, etc.) (12.2 percent), child issues (9.6 percent), and they are disabled (9 percent).

Job Skills

Unemployed respondents were provided a list of job skills and asked to indicate if they had that skill. As Table 7 indicates, most of the unemployed respondents reported that they get along well with others (81.6 percent of those answering the question), can do basic math (77.7 percent), have a positive attitude (72 percent), can communicate clearly (69.7 percent), can read well (69.6 percent), and can write well (64.6 percent). About half of the unemployed respondents indicated that they could understand business machines (53.9 percent) and solve problems well (51.2 percent). About one-third of the unemployed respondents were familiar with basic computer operations (32.9 percent), and 17.8 percent reported that they can do advanced math (statistics).

Those with at least a high school degree or GED, women, and respondents under age 30 were more likely than others to report that they get along well with others, can do basic math, have a positive attitude, can communicate clearly, can read well, can write well, can understand business machines, can solve problems well, and are familiar with basic computer operations. Those with at least a high school degree or GED, those under age 30, and those residing in a town or city were more likely than others to report that they can do advanced math.

Table 7

What skills do you have right now that could help you to get a job? (Unemployed Respondents only)

Skills	Percentage
I get along well with others	81.6%
I can do basic math	77.7%
I have a positive attitude	72.0%
I can communicate clearly	69.7%
I read well	69.6%
I write well	64.6%
I understand business machines	53.9%
I can solve problems well	51.2%
I am familiar with basic computer operations	32.9%
I can do advanced math	17.8%

N = 512

Working Respondents

About one in every four (26.2 percent) of the respondents reported that they were working (employed or participating in CWEP or JOIN) at the time they completed the survey. They were asked a series of questions about their employment/working experiences. For example, more than half of the working respondents (61.6 percent of those answering the question) had permanent jobs, about one-third (32.3 percent) had temporary jobs, and 6.1 percent had seasonal jobs. Also, approximately one in every four of those engaged in a working experience (23 percent) indicated that their working experience was part of the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) or the Joint Opportunities for Independence Program (JOIN) (note: an analysis of the data revealed that other than differences in compensation, there were very little differences in the responses to the questions from those employed and those participating in CWEP and JOIN).

Respondents with a working telephone, those residing in an economically nondistressed county, and women were

more likely than others to have permanent jobs. Respondents without a working phone and those who are over age 30 were more likely than others to have their jobs through CWEP.

As Table 8 shows, about one-quarter of the working respondents (25.4 percent) reported that they had only one paying job in the past five years, 21.5 percent reported that they had two paying jobs, 23.8 percent reported that they had three paying jobs, 9.8 percent reported that they had four paying jobs, and 19.5 percent reported that they had five or more paying jobs. Also, most of the working respondents (85.8 percent answering the question) reported that they had been at their current job for one year or less, with 21.7 percent of them at their current job for less than a month, 40.9 percent between one and three months, 13.5 percent between four and six months, and 9.7 percent between seven and 12 months. In addition, 10.7 percent of working respondents reported that they had been at their current job between one and three years, and 3.5 percent reported that they had been at their current job for more than three years.

Nonmarried respondents, those under age 30, and those residing in an economically nondistressed county were more likely than others to have had more than two paying jobs over the past five years. Also, respondents over age 30 were more likely than younger respondents to have been at their current job for more than three months.

Table 8

How many paying jobs have you had in the past five years? (Working Respondents Only)

Number	Percentage
One	25.4%
Two	21.5%
Three	23.8%
Four	9.8%
Five or more	19.5%

N = 307

About one-half of the working respondents (49.8 percent of those answering the question) reported that they worked on a part-time basis (defined as 30 hours or less) and about one-half (50.2 percent) reported that they worked on a full-time basis. Specifically, 8.5 percent reported working from one to 10 hours a week, 17 percent reported working from 11 to 20 hours per week, 24.3 percent reported working from 21 to 30 hours per week, 43.5 percent reported working from 31 to 40 hours per week, and 6.6 percent reported working more than 40 hours per week.

Men were more likely than women and married respondents were more likely than nonmarried respondents to work full-time.

Earnings

Working respondents earned, on average, \$5.43 an hour and \$534.28 per month (the medians were \$5.32 per hour and \$500 per month) (note: employed respondents only - excluding respondents participating in CWEP and JOIN - earned, on average, \$5.39 an hour and \$594.94 per month, the medians were \$5.35 per hour and \$575 per month).

Men were paid, on average, higher hourly wages than women (\$6.23 an hour versus \$5.34 an hour). Men also had higher monthly incomes (\$748.35 a month versus \$512.97 a month). Respondents with permanent jobs also received

higher hourly and monthly wages than their seasonally or temporarily employed counterparts (\$5.70 an hour versus \$4.48 an hour and \$631.98 a month versus \$440.75 a month). Hourly wages for respondents residing in economically distressed counties were less than those received by respondents residing in other counties (\$5.17 an hour versus \$5.68 an hour). In addition, respondents over age 30 had higher average monthly incomes than their younger counterparts (\$581.33 a month compared to \$500.10 a month) and, as one would expect, respondents employed on a full-time basis had higher average monthly incomes than those employed part-time (\$673.75 a month compared to \$436.82 a month).

Benefits

Most of the working respondents did not receive benefits from their employer beyond their paycheck. For example, only 26.9 percent indicated that their job provided paid vacation or personal days, only 22.8 percent had jobs with paid holidays, only 14.8 percent had health benefits that were paid either in full or in part by their employer, only 14.2 percent had a retirement plan, only 14.1 percent received paid sick leave, and only 1.6 percent had child care provided by their employer.

Working respondents that resided in an economically nondistressed county were more likely than those residing in an economically distressed county to have paid vacation or personal days and/or health benefits paid in full or in part by their employer. Also, respondents under age 30 were more likely than those over 30 to have paid vacation or personal days.

Part-time versus Full-time

Respondents who worked part-time (less than 30 hours a week) were provided a list of reasons that might explain why they were working less than 30 hours a week. They were then asked to answer “yes” if they felt that they were working less than 30 hours a week because of the reason listed and “no” if they did not feel that they were working less than 30 hours a week because of the reason listed. The most frequently cited reasons for working less than 30 hours a week were:

- the job does not require a full-time person (45.7 percent of those answering the question);
- they could not find a full-time job (35.1 percent);
- their family would lose benefits (such as food stamps, medical card) if they worked more hours (23 percent);
- they lacked child care (21.7 percent); and
- they lacked transportation (20.7 percent).

Respondents without a working telephone were more likely than those with a working telephone to report that the reason they were not working full-time was they could not find a full-time job and that they lacked transportation.

Daily Commute

Most of the working respondents (82.1 percent of those answering the question) worked in the county in which they lived, with 16.3 percent commuting less than a mile between their homes and their job, about one-third (34 percent) commuting between one and five miles, 16.6 percent commuting between six and 10 miles, 17.8 percent commuting

between 11 and 20 miles, and 15.3 percent commuting more than 20 miles.

Most of the working respondents (60.1 percent of those answering the question) took less than 20 minutes to get to work each day, with about a quarter of them (28.3 percent) taking 10 minutes or less, about one-third (31.8 percent) taking between 11 and 20 minutes, 16.7 percent taking from 21 to 30 minutes, and 23.2 percent taking more than 30 minutes.

Respondents residing in an economically distressed county and those residing in rural areas were more likely than others to report that they traveled more than six miles each day to get to work and that it took them more than 20 minutes to get to work. Also, married respondents were more likely than nonmarried respondents to travel more than six miles a day to get to their place of employment. Moreover, respondents residing in DHHR’s regions 1 and 2 (western West Virginia) were more likely than those residing in DHHR’s regions 3 and 4 (eastern West Virginia) to travel more than six miles to get to their jobs.

Open-ended Questions

In an effort to obtain more detailed, qualitative information from WV WORKS working respondents, they were provided space to write a response to the following five open-ended questions:

- What do you feel are the benefits of working?
- What do you feel are the drawbacks of working?
- What challenges have you faced while you have been working?
- How have you dealt with these challenges to working?
- Is there anything that the Department of Health and Resources can do, or do differently, to help you overcome these challenges to working?

The most frequently mentioned written responses to “What do you feel are the benefits of working?” were: the money (33 percent), independence (18.8 percent), improved self-esteem (15.7 percent), I like working (4.4 percent), the learning experience (3.9 percent), and it keeps me busy (3.6 percent).

The most frequently mentioned written responses to “What do you feel are the drawbacks of working?” were: the loss of family time (35.9 percent), there are no drawbacks (15.7 percent), the loss of government benefits (9.2 percent), the job does not pay enough money (7.6 percent), the lack of child care or problems with child care (6.8 percent), and personal health problems (3.7 percent).

The most frequently mentioned written responses to “What challenges have you faced while you have been working?” were: job-related issues (for example, getting along with co-workers or customers, learning to do the work, etc.) (17.5 percent), transportation (15.9 percent), none (15.4 percent), child care issues (14 percent), the loss of family time (8.6 percent), the job does not pay enough money (6.7 percent), and personal health problems (4 percent).

The most frequently mentioned written responses to “How have you dealt with these challenges to working?” were: I adapted or made other arrangements (33.7 percent), I just did or I took it one day at a time (18.8 percent), I didn’t (11.6 percent), there were no problems (9 percent), family or a friend helped out (5.7 percent), I borrowed, cut back, or did

without money (5.4 percent), and I quit or changed jobs (4.8 percent).

The most frequently mentioned written responses to “Is there anything the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, to help you overcome these challenges?” were: no (35.5 percent), help with transportation (11.8 percent), provide transitional benefits (7.6 percent), help me get a “real” job (6.5 percent), help with child care or child support (5.9 percent), treat me better or provide more information (4.8 percent), provide more education or training (4.5 percent), and help address health concerns (get glasses, fix teeth, etc.) (4.2 percent).

Vocational/ Educational/Job Training Program Experiences

Most scholars and practitioners agree that job training and educational attainment are two critical factors affecting an individual’s ability to make the transition from welfare to economic self-sufficiency. Almost one-third of the respondents (30.4 percent) reported that they were currently participating in a vocational, educational or job training program. As shown on Table 9, the most frequently cited programs were the Community Work Experience Program (13.5 percent) and adult basic education or GED classes (6.5 percent).

Respondents residing in an economically distressed county, those over age 30, and respondents residing in DHHR’s regions 2 and 4 (southern West Virginia) were more likely than others to be currently participating in CWEP. Also, as one would expect, respondents without a GED or a high school degree were more likely than those with a GED or high school degree to be participating in an Adult Basic Education/GED program. Respondents residing in an economically distressed county and those residing in DHHR’s regions 3 and 4 (eastern West Virginia) were more likely than others to be currently participating in a job readiness class.

Are you currently participating in:	
Program	% of All Respondents
Community Work Experience Program (CWEP)	13.5%
Adult Basic Education or GED classes	6.5%
Job Readiness Class	5.1%
Other Programs	3.8%
Vocational Education	2.6%
Four-Year College	2.4%
Community College	2.2%
JOIN	1.7%
Rehabilitative Services	1.2%
Survival Skills for Women	1.2%
Summer Youth Employment	1.0%
N = 1,206	

Program Completion

About four of every ten respondents (41.5 percent) reported they had completed at least one job training or education program. As shown on Table 10, the most frequently cited programs were the now-defunct Job Training Partnership Act Program (17.2 percent of all respondents), job readiness classes (15.7 percent), the Community Work Experience Program (14.6 percent), and adult basic education or GED classes (13.4 percent).

Respondents with at least a GED or high school degree were more likely than those with less formal education to

complete the Job Training Partnership Act program, the Community Work Experience Program, and their Job Readiness Class. Also, respondents residing in an economically distressed county were more likely than those residing in a non-economically distressed county to complete the Community Work Experience Program. Respondents over age 30 were more likely than those under age 30 to complete the Community Work Experience Program and job readiness classes. Respondents without a GED or high school degree, those with three or more children, and those residing in DHHR’s regions 3 and 4 (eastern West Virginia) were more likely than others to complete their Adult Basic Education classes. Respondents who had applied for and received AFDC/TANF three times or more in their lifetime were more likely than those who had applied for and received AFDC/TANF less than four times in their lifetime to complete their Job Readiness Class. Finally, respondents residing in DHHR’s regions 1 and 4 were more likely to complete the job readiness classes than those residing in DHHR’s regions 2 and 3.

Have you completed:	
Program	% of All Respondents
Job Training Partnership Act	17.2%
Job Readiness Class	15.7%
Community Work Experience Program (CWEP)	14.6%
Adult Basic Education/GED class	13.4%
Vocational Training	8.5%
Other programs	3.9%
Survival Skills for Women	3.5%
Summer Youth Employment	3.0%
JOIN	2.1%
Community College	2.0%
Rehabilitative Services	1.3%
Four-Year College	0.8%
N = 1,206	

Program Information Source

Respondents who participated in a job training or education program were provided a list of information sources and were asked if they heard about the employment or job training program from the source. As Table 11 indicates, the most frequently cited source was the DHHR/welfare office (67.7 percent of those responding to the question had heard about the employment or job training program from DHHR), followed by the state employment service (22.4 percent), a friend or acquaintance (20.7 percent), family member or other relative (17.8 percent), newspaper, radio or television (16.6 percent), and a Family Resource Network (3.6 percent).

Respondents with at least a GED or high school degree were more likely than those with less formal education to hear about these programs from a newspaper, radio, or television, from a friend or acquaintance, and from the state employment service. Respondents with less than a GED or a high school degree and those residing in economically distressed counties were more likely than others to hear about these programs from the DHHR/welfare office. Also, non-married respondents, those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times, and respondents residing in DHHR’s regions 1 and 2 (western West Virginia) were more likely than others to hear about these programs from a newspaper, radio, or television.

Respondents under age 30 were more likely than those over 30 to learn about these programs from a family member. Men were more likely than women to hear about these programs through the state employment service.

Table 11

Did you hear about the employment or job training program(s) from these sources? (Employment/job training participants only)

Source	Percentage
DHHR/welfare office	67.7%
State Employment Service	22.4%
Friend or acquaintance	20.7%
Family member or other relative	17.8%
Newspaper, radio or TV	16.6%
Family resource network	3.6%

N = 760

note: percentages exceed 100 percent because respondents were allowed to cite more than one information source.

New or Improved Skills

Respondents who had participated in a job training or education program were presented with a list of job-related skills. They were then asked if they had learned or improved these skills in their job training or education program(s). As Table 12 indicates, nearly half of the respondents to this question indicated that they had learned job readiness skills (interviewing, resume writing, grooming, etc.) from their job training or education program(s). The next most cited learned skills were office skills (26.7 percent of those responding to the question), child care or adult care skills (21.2 percent), custodial skills (18.7 percent), and computer training (18.4 percent).

Respondents with at least a GED or high school degree were more likely than those with less formal education to learn or improve their job readiness skills. Women and respondents under age 30 were more likely than others to learn or improve child care or adult care skills. Women, those with at least a GED or high school degree, and those with a working telephone were more likely than others to learn or improve computer skills. Women, respondents under age 30, nonmarried respondents, respondents with a working telephone, respondents with at least a GED or high school degree, and those residing in DHHR's regions 1, 2, and 4 were more likely than those residing in region 3 to learn or improve office skills. Respondents over age 30 and those with three or more children were more likely than others to learn or improve custodial skills.

Table 12

Did you learn or improve the following skills in the job training or education program(s)? (Employment/job training participants only)

Skill	Percentage
Job readiness	49.5%
Office skills	26.7%
Child care or adult care skills	21.2%
Custodial Skills	18.7%
Computer training	18.4%
Health care skills	17.9%
Food service	15.9%
Skilled trade	5.1%
Advanced medical training	6.1%
Personal service skills	3.2%

N = 626 to 658

Program Assessment

The respondents were asked to assess the helpfulness of their job training and education programs in getting them a job. About one-quarter (28.8 percent) of the respondents answering this question reported that their job training or educational programs were very helpful in getting them a job, 19.2 percent reported that they were somewhat helpful, and 24.9 percent reported that they would have been helpful, but there were no jobs available. Only about a quarter of the respondents to this question (27.1 percent) said that their job training or educational program(s) were not helpful in getting them a job. Respondents with three or more children were more likely than those with fewer children to report that their job training or education program experience was not helpful in getting them a job.

Child Care

Child care is universally recognized as being an important factor affecting the transition from welfare to economic self-sufficiency, especially for women with preschool-age children. In recognition of this, West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources has made a special effort in recent years to provide funding for child care assistance. In 2000, West Virginia had the highest funding rate for child care in the South (24 percent of eligible low-income families received assistance)(AP 2000). The survey suggests that these efforts were, and continue to be, needed. About two-thirds of the respondents (67.9 percent) reported that they had child care needs. These respondents were asked a series of questions concerning their child care arrangements. As Table 13 indicates, 67.6 percent of the respondents answering this question reported that they watched their children themselves, 44.8 percent reported that other family members cared for their children, and 15.8 percent reported that friends or neighbors provided them with child care assistance.

Table 13

Which of the following currently provides your child (or children) with child care? (Respondents with child care needs only)

Provider	Percentage
Yourself	67.6%
Other family member	44.8%
Friend or neighbor	15.8%
Child care center	14.1%
No one	9.6%
Head Start	7.6%
After-school program	2.2%

N = 819

Respondents lacking a GED or high school degree are more likely than those with a GED or high school degree to use a friend or neighbor for child care. Younger respondents (those under age 30) are more likely than older respondents to use a friend or neighbor for child care, to use a child care center, and to use Head Start. They are less likely than older respondents to use an after-school program. Also, married respondents are more likely than nonmarried respondents to provide their own child care, and they are less likely than nonmarried respondents to use a friend or neighbor for child care and to use a child care center.

Respondents with households having three or more children are less likely to use a child center than those with fewer than three children. Respondents from towns or cities are more likely than respondents from rural areas to use Head Start. Also, respondents from economically distressed counties are more likely than respondents from other counties to provide their own child care.

About one-third of the respondents with child care needs (35.9 percent) reported that their children were in child care for 25 or more hours per week, about one-quarter (22.6 percent) reported that their children were in child care between 11 and 24 hours per week, and the remainder (41.5 percent) reported that their children were in child care for 10 or fewer hours per week.

Respondents under age 30, without a GED or high school degree, who are not married, have households with less than three children, reside in economically nondistressed counties, or are employed full-time are all more likely than others to have their children in child care for 25 or more hours a week.

As Table 14 shows, children are in child care situations at all hours of the day and night during the week, with the most frequent times being between 6 a.m. and noon (22.4 percent) and between noon and 6 p.m. (22.3 percent).

Respondents over 30 years old are less likely than younger respondents to have child care needs between noon and 6 p.m. during the week. Respondents with full-time jobs are less likely than those without a full-time job to need child care between midnight and 6 a.m.

Table 14	
On weekdays, my child (children) is in child care between... (Respondents with child care needs only)	
Time	Percentage
Midnight and 6 a.m.	9.8%
Between 6 a.m and noon	22.4%
Between noon and 6 p.m.	22.3%
Between 6 p.m. and midnight	11.8%
None of these	36.1%*
N = 778	
*primarily weekends	
Note: percentages exceed 100 percent because child can be in child care in more than one time category.	

As Table 15 shows, children are in child care situations at all hours of the day and night on the weekends as well, with the most frequent times being between noon and 6 p.m. (9.6 percent) and between 6 p.m. and midnight (7.1 percent).

Table 15	
On weekends, my child (children) is in child care between... (Respondents with child care needs only)	
Time	Percentage
Midnight and 6 a.m.	2.5%
Between 6 a.m and noon	5.8%
Between noon and 6 p.m.	9.6%
Between 6 p.m. and midnight	7.1%
None of these	50.2%*
N = 690	
*primarily weekdays	

About one-third of the respondents with child care needs (36.4 percent) indicated that they received assistance from the state to help pay for their child care costs.

About two-thirds of the respondents with child care needs (65.6 percent) reported that if they had access to an affordable child care center they would use it.

Respondents from economically nondistressed counties were more likely than those from economically distressed counties to report that they would use an affordable child care center if it were available.

About half of the respondents with child care needs (53.7 percent) reported that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to get a job, 20.4 percent indicated that their child care needs made it easier for them to get a job, and 25.9 percent said that their child care needs had no impact on their getting a job.

Women, respondents without a GED or high school degree, and those under age 30 were more likely than others to report that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to get a job.

A little less than half of the respondents with child care needs (45.4 percent) reported that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to go to school, 17.9 percent indicated that their child care needs made it easier for them to go to school, and 36.7 percent said that their child care needs had no impact on their going to school.

Women, respondents without a GED or high school degree, and those under age 30 were also more likely than others to report that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to go to school.

A little less than half of the respondents with child care needs (45.5 percent of those answering the question) reported that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to get job training, 16.1 percent indicated that their child care needs made it easier for them to get job training, and 38.4 percent said that their child care needs had no impact on their getting job training.

Women and respondents without a GED or high school degree were more likely than others to report that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to get job training.

Almost one-third of the respondents with child care needs (31.4 percent) reported that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to keep peace in the family, 18.9 percent indicated that their child care needs made it easier for them to keep peace in the family, and 49.7 percent said that their child care needs had no impact on their keeping peace in the family.

Women and respondents without a GED or a high school degree were also more likely than others to report that their child care needs made it more difficult for them to keep peace in the family.

As shown on Table 16, more than half of the respondents with child care needs (54.4 percent) indicated that it was either very hard (34.5 percent) or hard (19.9 percent) to find child care for their children.

Table 16	
How hard has it been for you to find child care for your child (or children)? (Respondents with child care needs only)	
Difficulty	Percentage
Very Hard	34.5%
Hard	19.9%
Not too hard	23.9%
Easy	10.6%
Very Easy	11.0%
N = 689	

Respondents were then asked “If it has been hard or very hard for you to find child care for your child (or children), what caused the difficulty?” The most frequently cited difficulty was I can’t find someone I trust (18.5 percent of those responding to the question), followed by there was none available or there were no openings (13.2 percent), transportation (12.6 percent), lack of money (12.1 percent), and my child has special needs (8.4 percent).

As Table 17 indicates, most of the respondents with child care needs (64 percent) were either very satisfied (39.4 percent) or satisfied (24.6 percent) with their current child care arrangements. Another 17.9 percent were not sure, 8.1 percent were dissatisfied, and 10 percent were very dissatisfied. The relatively strong satisfaction with their current child care arrangements is not surprising given that most of the child care was provided by the respondents or another family member.

How satisfied are you with your current child care arrangements? (Respondents with child care needs only)	
Satisfaction	Percentage
Very satisfied	39.4%
Satisfied	24.6%
Not sure	17.9%
Dissatisfied	8.1%
Very dissatisfied	10.0%
N = 627	

Program Knowledge

Respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their knowledge of the various programs and options available to them. They were first provided a list of six statements and asked to determine if the statements were correct or incorrect, or if they did not know the answer to indicate that they did not know the answer.

As Table 18 indicates, most of the respondents (75 percent of those answering the question) provided an incorrect response or did not know that you can receive Medicaid benefits if you leave WV WORKS; most of the respondents (74.6 percent) provided an incorrect response or did not know that you can receive money from the federal earned income tax credit if you work even if you do not make enough money to file a federal income tax form; and most of the respondents (70.5 percent) provided an incorrect response or did not know that you can receive food stamps if you leave WV WORKS. Also, many respondents (41.8 percent) provided an incorrect response or did not know that women must cooperate with child support services in order to receive WV WORKS benefits unless they are in a domestic violence situation. Also, about one-third of the respondents (36.3 percent) provided an incorrect response or did not know that people will be removed from WV WORKS when they reach their 60-month time limit. Finally, about one-quarter of the respondents (22.1 percent) provided an incorrect response or did not know that they can appeal decisions made by their caseworker.

Respondents residing in rural areas were more likely than those residing in cities and towns to provide an incorrect answer or to admit to not knowing people will be removed from WV WORKS when they reach their 60-month time limit. Respondents without a GED or high school degree and those residing in DHHR’s regions 1, 2, and 3 were more likely than

those residing in region 4 to provide an incorrect answer or to admit to not knowing that they could appeal decisions made by their caseworker. Respondents without a GED or high school degree, those under age 30, those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits fewer than four times, and those residing in rural areas were more likely than others to provide an incorrect answer or to admit to not knowing that you can receive Medicaid benefits if you leave WV WORKS. Respondents without a GED or high school degree, those under age 30, and those residing in DHHR’s regions 1, 2, and 3 were more likely than others to provide an incorrect answer or to admit to not knowing that you can receive food stamps if you leave WV WORKS. Men and those under age 30 were more likely than others to provide an incorrect answer or to admit to not knowing that women must cooperate with child support services in order to receive WV WORKS benefits unless they are in a domestic violence situation.

Test of Program Knowledge				
Please mark the appropriate response based on your knowledge of the following statements. If you do not know the answer, please mark “don’t know.”				
Statement	Yes	No	Don't know+	
			Don't know	Incorrect
You cannot receive Medicaid benefits if you leave WV WORKS	27.8%	25.0%	47.2%	75.0%
You can receive money from the federal earned income tax credit if you work even if you do not make enough money to file a federal income tax form	25.5%	9.3%	65.3%	74.6%
You cannot receive food stamps if you leave WV WORKS	27.1%	29.4%	43.4%	70.5%
Women must cooperate with child support services in order to receive WV WORKS benefits (unless they are in a domestic violence situation)	58.2%	5.3%	36.5%	41.8%
People will be removed from WV WORKS when they reach their 60-month time limit	63.7%	3.6%	32.7%	36.3%
You can appeal decisions made by your caseworker	77.9%	3.3%	18.8%	22.1%
N = 1,122 to 1,131				

Respondents were also provided a list of programs and services and asked to answer “yes” if they had enough information about the program or service to make an informed decision about it, and “no” if they did not have enough information about the program or service to make an informed decision about it. Because respondents were allowed to answer or skip each program and service, the number of respondents responding to each program or service varied from 1,035 to 1,083.

As Table 19 demonstrates, most of the respondents reported that they had enough information about food stamp eligibility (72.2 percent of those answering the question), and a majority reported that they had enough information about their personal responsibility contract (58 percent), emergency assistance (56.9 percent), WV WORKS policy (rules and regulations) (55.8 percent), and WV WORKS time limits (53.3 percent). Less than half of the respondents reported that they had enough information about education options (like GED and vo-tech classes and college) (48 percent), transporta-

tion reimbursements (37 percent), job training options (36.9 percent), supportive services (clothing needed for work, car repair, etc.) (35.8 percent), and child care support or subsidies (35.3 percent). Less than one-third of the respondents reported that they had enough information about the federal earned income tax credit (26.8 percent), WV WORKS dental and vision benefits (26.1 percent), transitional Medicaid benefits (26 percent), and the employer health insurance buy-in program (15.5 percent).

Respondents residing in DHHR region 2 were less likely than others to report that they had enough information about food stamp eligibility, their personal responsibility contract, emergency assistance, WV WORKS policies and rules, WV WORKS time limits, education options, transportation reimbursements, job training options, and transitional Medicaid benefits. Also, men were less likely than women to report that they had enough information about the federal earned income tax credit and respondents over age 30 were less likely than younger respondents to report that they had enough information about child care support and the employer health insurance buy-in program.

Table 19

Do you have enough information about the following to make an informed decision about...

Program or Service	% Yes
Food stamp eligibility	72.2%
Personal responsibility contract	58.0%
Emergency assistance	56.9%
WV WORKS policy (rules and regulations)	55.8%
WV WORKS time limits	53.3%
Education options (like GED and vo-tech classes and college)	48.0%
Transportation reimbursements	37.0%
Job training options	36.9%
Supportive services (clothing for work, car repair, etc.)	35.8%
Child care support or subsidies	35.3%
Federal earned income tax credit	26.8%
WV WORKS dental and vision benefits	26.1%
Transitional Medicaid benefits	26.0%
Employer health insurance buy-in program	15.5%

N = 1,035 to 1,083

Open-ended Questions

In an effort to supplement the quantitative nature of the survey questions, respondents were provided space to write in an answer to the following five open-ended questions:

- If there was one thing that could be done to improve your own well-being, or the well-being of your family, what would it be?
- Is there anything that the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, that would help you to improve your own well-being, or your family's well-being?
- Is there anything that the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, that would help you to become economically self-sufficient?
- If there was one thing that you could change about WV WORKS, what would it be?
- What is the best thing about WV WORKS?

Most of the respondents (81.4 percent) answered the open-ended question, "If there was one thing that could be done to improve your own well-being, or the well-being of

your family, what would it be? As Table 20 shows, the most frequently mentioned written response was finding a good or better paying job (33 percent of those responding to the question), followed by getting more education or training (12.5 percent), and getting healthy (10.2 percent).

Table 20

If there was one thing that could be done to improve your own well-being, or the well-being of your family, what would it be?

Response	Percentage
Find a good or better paying job	33.0%
Get more education or training	12.5%
Get healthy	10.2%
Nothing	6.9%
Get more money	6.6%
Find reliable transportation	6.4%
Get better housing	5.7%
Resolve child care/child support issues	5.4%

N = 982

Most of the respondents (74 percent) also answered the open-ended question, "Is there anything that the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, that would help you to improve your own well-being, or your family's well-being? The most frequently mentioned written response was nothing (26.2 percent of those answering the question), followed by providing more help with finding a job or a better paying job (8.2 percent), and improving their worker's demeanor (7.7 percent).

Most of the respondents (63 percent) also answered the open-ended question, "Is there anything that the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, that would help you to become economically self-sufficient?" The written responses were very similar to those provided for the preceding question. As Table 21 shows, the most frequently mentioned written response was nothing (35.8 percent of those answering the question), followed by providing more help with finding a job or a better paying job (10.3 percent), providing more education or training (8.8 percent), providing more help with transportation (6.7 percent), increase benefits (4.6 percent), and improve their worker's demeanor (4.3 percent).

Table 21

Is there anything that the Department of Health and Human Resources can do, or do differently, that would help you to become economically self-sufficient?

Response	Percentage
No, Nothing	35.8%
Provide more help with finding a job or a better paying job	10.3%
Provide more education or training	8.8%
Provide more help with transportation	6.7%
Increase benefits	4.6%
Improve their worker's demeanor	4.3%

N = 760

Most of the respondents (66.7 percent) answered the open-ended question, "If there was one thing that you could change about WV WORKS, what would it be?" As shown in Table 22, the most frequently mentioned response was change nothing (18 percent of those answering the question), followed by providing more help finding a job or a better paying job (11 percent), and eliminating or extending the time limit (10.7 percent).

Table 22

If there was one thing that you could change about WV WORKS, what would it be?

Response	Percentage
Nothing	18.0%
Provide more help finding a job or a better paying job	11.0%
Eliminate or extend the time limit	10.7%
Increase benefits	8.7%
Improve information/flexibility	8.3%
Improve their worker's demeanor	6.5%
Provide more education or training	4.9%
Provide more help with transportation	3.7%

N = 804

Most of the respondents (76.3 percent) answered the open-ended question, "What is the best thing about WV WORKS? The most frequently mentioned response was its help with finding a job (16.7 percent of those answering the question), followed by its help in general (for example, "they help you when you need it" and "the help they give you when you have nothing") (15 percent), and food stamps and/or Medicaid (12.5 percent).

West Virginia in a Comparative Context

Nationally, the number of people on AFDC/TANF declined by 56 percent from January 1993 to December 1999 (from 14.1 million recipients to 6.3 million recipients). AFDC/TANF caseloads (families) declined by 52 percent over this time period (from 4.9 million families to 2.3 million families). While several factors help to account for the dramatic decline, most scholars and practitioners agree that at least part of the explanation for this dramatic decline is due to the policy changes brought about by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and part is due to the job opportunities brought about by the nation's relatively robust economy during the 1990s.

In West Virginia, the number of people on AFDC/TANF declined 76 percent between January 1993 and December 1999, from 119,916 to 28,850 (DHHS 2000b). Also, West Virginia's AFDC/TANF caseload declined 74 percent between January 1993 and December 1999, the highest rate of decline in the Mid-Atlantic region and much higher than the national average.

Much of West Virginia's dramatic decline in both the number of individuals on WV WORKS and WV WORKS caseload coincided with the state's implementation of the changes mandated by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 through its phasing in of the WV WORKS program on a county-by-county basis in 1997. All 55 counties were operating under WV WORKS by January 1998. As the WV WORKS program expanded, West Virginia's caseload declined. For example, between January 1997 and January 1998 West Virginia's TANF/WV WORKS caseload fell from 36,805 to 19,914 (DHHS 2000d). WV WORKS caseload continued to decline throughout 1998 and much of 1999. In December 1999, WV WORKS caseload had fallen to 10,936 (DHHS 2000d).

WV WORKS caseload increased during the winter of 2000, reaching 15,371 in March 2000. At least part of the explanation for the increase was the reversal of a past policy decision to count SSI income when determining eligibility for the

program, and part was due to seasonal unemployment patterns. By June of 2000, WV WORKS caseload had fallen back to 12,247, and it continued to fall, averaging 11,556 during the third quarter.

Who Remains on TANF?

The characteristics of TANF caseloads nationwide have changed since 1990. For example, the average age of TANF recipients nationwide has increased from 29.7 years in 1990 to 31.8 years in 1999, primarily because older recipients have proven to be more likely than younger recipients to remain on cash assistance (DHHS 2000e). Also, as part of this "greying" of the welfare population, the proportion of families on TANF with a youngest child who was a toddler (aged one or two) has declined sharply, from 30 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 1999; and the proportion of families with no preschoolers in the household (no child under age six) increased sharply, from 36 percent in 1990 to 44 percent in 1999. In addition, the racial composition of TANF recipients has changed, with minority groups accounting for an increasing proportion of the caseload. In 1990, 38 percent of TANF recipients nationwide were white, 40 percent were African-American, 17 percent were Hispanic, and 5 percent were other. In 1999, 31 percent of TANF recipients nationwide were white, 38 percent were African-American, 25 percent were Hispanic, and 6 percent were other (DHHS 2000e).

Some scholars and practitioners have argued that TANF caseloads are now more disadvantaged than in the past. They note that minorities often have a more difficult time finding employment, finding full-time employment, and finding permanent employment than whites. They also note that older recipients with older children comprise an increasing proportion of the caseload, suggesting the existence of a "hard-core" group of recipients who are having a particularly difficult transition to economic independence.

While scholars and practitioners continue to debate whether the current TANF caseload is more or less disadvantaged than in the past, they agree that educational attainment, work experience, the need to care for young children and/or disabled children, and personal physical or mental health problems are key factors impacting an individual's ability to make the transition off of TANF. When individuals have more than one of these challenges, the transition off of TANF can be particularly challenging (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999).

Two of the most critical barriers to the transition from TANF to employment are a lack of educational attainment and a lack of work experience. As one would expect, the educational attainment and work experience of TANF recipients nationwide, and in West Virginia, are relatively low. As Table 23 indicates, 41 percent of TANF recipients nationwide lack a GED or high school degree. Also, 43 percent have had no work experience during the previous three years. The educational attainment of the respondents to this survey was also relatively low, but slightly higher than the national average, with 39.6 percent lacking a GED or high school degree compared to the national average of 41 percent. Their work experience was also relatively low, but somewhat higher than the national average, with 38.2 percent having no work experience over the past three years compared to 43 percent nationwide.

Table 23

Educational Attainment and Work Experience for TANF Recipients, West Virginia Compared to U.S. Averages

	West Virginia	U.S.
No High School Degree or GED	39.6%	41%
No work experience or last employed three years ago	38.2%	43%

Note: U.S. data is from the 1997 National Survey of America's Families by Loprest and Zedlewski. 1999. "Current and Former Welfare Recipients, How Do They Differ?" Discussion Paper, Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

The Well-Being of Those on TANF

One of the primary purposes of cash assistance programs is to help individuals during times of financial need. However, as the data reported in Table 3 aptly demonstrated, living expenses can surpass the amount of cash assistance received, forcing families to make sacrifices and trade-offs concerning such activities as going to the dentist, getting glasses, buying food, buying medicine, paying the rent, and visiting the doctor. Recent research suggests that this is a national phenomenon (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999). For example:

- About half (51.5 percent) of the respondents to this survey reported that while receiving monthly cash assistance they had experienced times when they did not have enough money to buy food. A national study in 1997 found that 35 percent of their respondents reported having to cut back on the size of meals, 17 percent often did not have enough money for food, and 44 percent sometimes did not have enough money for food (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999).
- Nearly half (45 percent) of the respondents to this survey reported that while receiving monthly cash assistance they had experienced times when they did not have enough money to pay the rent. Nationally, 35 percent of AFDC/TANF recipients in 1997 had experienced a time when they could not pay mortgage, rent, or utility bills (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999).
- 16 percent of the respondents to this survey reported that while receiving monthly cash assistance they moved in with someone else to share expenses. In the 1997 national study, 6 percent reported having to move in with someone else (Loprest and Zedlewski 1999).

Recent state actions to increase monthly cash assistance payments should help to alleviate some of the financial pressures on WV WORKS recipients. The state has also increased its efforts to provide additional support and services to WV WORKS clients. These efforts were made possible following new federal rules issued in October of 1999 expanding the options available to states to provide support services and other assistance to those on TANF and those at risk of joining TANF. The new rules allow states to provide services to non-TANF recipients with children who are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line. Also, so long as the assistance is short-term or specifically targeted to a need, those who receive assistance are not counted as part of the state's TANF rolls. This means that the state does not have to place these individuals in work activities to satisfy federal work participation rates. It also means that receiving these benefits does not count against an individual's

sixty-month eligibility limit (Greenberg and Savner 1999; Tweedie 2000).

As noted earlier, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources developed and implemented a variety of new support services in 2000. The full impact of these services (for example, adult pre-employment vision services, adult pre-employment dental care, and transportation for participation in required activities) had yet to be felt when this survey was conducted. Details concerning these new initiatives can be found in the Department's WV WORKS Annual Report (DHHR 2000a) which is available on-line at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/ofs/2000AnnualReport.htm>.

Comparative Summary: Reform in a Rural State

After the adoption of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 some scholars and practitioners were convinced that rural states, such as West Virginia, would face distinct challenges in meeting the needs of TANF recipients while complying with the new law's rules and regulations (Edelman 1997; Rural Policy Research Institute 1999). That more than half (55.7 percent) of the survey's respondents reported that they had left WV WORKS and returned within the past 12 months, and 73.8 percent of them were not engaged in a work activity at the time of the survey suggests that these concerns are well founded. Experience reveals that there are, indeed, distinct challenges to implementing welfare reform in a rural state where job prospects are often limited, wages are relatively low, and the availability of services, such as public transportation and child care, are limited.

The comments offered by the survey respondents attest to some of the especially difficult challenges and barriers faced by those who live in our state's rural areas, particularly those who live in what the Appalachian Regional Commission has labeled as economically distressed counties. As reported earlier, those who identified themselves as living in rural areas are not as optimistic about their future prospects as their counterparts living in cities and town. Those living in rural areas and in economically distressed counties are also more likely to be unemployed, and when employed have a difficult time finding adequate transportation and child care. According to data provided by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, from January through August 2000 the state's 26 economically distressed counties accounted for 32 percent of the state's population and 51 percent of the state's WV WORKS caseload.

Concluding Remarks

There is both good news and bad news in this study. For example, most of the respondents were relatively satisfied by the way they were treated by the Department of Health and Human Resources' personnel, the help the Department provided getting them other benefits, and with their overall experience with their caseworker. However, many of the respondents also reported that they did not have the knowledge necessary to make an informed judgment on a wide range of issues and available services, suggesting that more progress needs to be accomplished in this area. Also, most of the respondents are experiencing severe financial hardships, earning less than \$5,000 annually and experiencing times when they do not have enough money to buy essential items such as food and medicine. In addition, many of

the respondents reported that their personal and financial futures look poor or very poor. Yet, as a group, the respondents are relatively optimistic concerning their children's future, and nearly two-thirds of them reported that they did not expect to be on WV WORKS next year.

Respondents lacking a GED or high school degree (39.6 percent of respondents), those over age 30 (48.3 percent of respondents), those residing in economically distressed counties (defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission) (56.5 percent of respondents), and those who have applied for and received AFDC/TANF benefits more than three times in their lifetime (48.7 percent of respondents) emerge time and time again as having the most difficult time coping both financially and socially. They are at high risk of not being able to make the transition from WV WORKS to economic self-sufficiency. Also, most WV WORKS recipients (63.2 percent) possess more than one of these major, at-risk factors, and 28.3 percent possess three or more.

West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources has increased cash assistance payments and is currently implementing several new services that should help to alleviate some of the most dire economic pressures faced by WV WORKS recipients. The Department is also implementing a number of new support services that should help recipients find and retain employment. Yet, time and time again the respondents report that they face a number of employment barriers. Some of these barriers are common throughout the nation, such as the lack of child care and the recipients' lack of job experience and educational attainment. Other employment barriers are more specific to West Virginia, such as the state's relatively weak economy and job market, the lack of available and reliable transportation, especially in the state's rural areas, and a somewhat larger than average incidence of physical disability among WV WORKS male recipients. Hopefully, the information from this study, and future ones, will be useful to the state's policymakers as they devise new and revise existing policies to address the needs of our state's most vulnerable citizens.

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