

HOT TOPICS

Stress Reactions to 9/11 Attacks Felt All Across the Country: 35% of Children Had Substantial Symptoms

After the September 11th attacks, a RAND survey research group interviewed by telephone a nationally representative sample of 560 adults (age 19 and over) between September 14 and 16, asking them about their own reactions in the aftermath of the attacks and also about their perceptions of their children's reactions.

Among children five years old or older, more than a third displayed one or more stress symptoms and almost half expressed worry about their own safety or the safety of loved ones, according to the survey published in the November 15, 2001 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Pediatricians and child psychiatrists recommend that parents restrict the amount of their children's TV viewing during such a crisis and also talk with them about it. About a third of parents say they limited the amount of TV news their kids watched, especially for those who were more stressed, and 84 percent reported that they or other adults in the household had talked to their children about the attacks for an hour or more. On average, kids watched three hours of TV news that day.

A summary of the complete study is available at www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB4546.

Options for Restructuring the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act

This report synthesizes the findings of a review of the structure and performance of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) and assesses options for reforming it. The Act provides for a \$600-million-per-year program of grants to states, which pass the money on to school districts for programs aimed at reducing school violence and drug abuse. However, the formula by which money is disbursed does not focus on the schools most in need of help, and it spreads the money too thinly.

Few proposals for reform have been offered, and only the one put forth by the Clinton administration reflects a serious analysis of the program's problems. The authors of the report, Peter H. Reuter and P. Michael Timpane, present criteria for judging reform options and suggest ways in which the proposal under discussion could be strengthened.

For a copy of the complete study go to www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1328.

UPCOMING RAND REPORTS

Consequences of Welfare Reform: A Research Synthesis

When the process of renewing the federal legislation that governs the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program begins in the summer of 2002, policymakers will need to understand the impact that past and current welfare reforms have had on outcomes of interest. To help policymakers in the renewal debate, RAND conducted a synthesis of the current state of knowledge about the effects of the TANF legislation and the TANF programs of individual states, reviewing more than 30 experimental studies and more than two dozen econometric studies.

One set of those outcomes specifically centers around child well-being, in particular the effect of welfare reform programs on child abuse and neglect, on behavioral problems and school performance, and on health. Unfortunately, the short run nature of the data in the studies available poses a problem for assessing how welfare reform affects the well-being of children.

Although some aspects of a child's well-being, such as misbehavior, may respond quickly in reaction to changes in her family's circumstances following welfare reform, other aspects, such as cognitive skills, are likely to take much longer to change. Thus, the long-run consequences of welfare reform on children will remain unknown for some time to come. Even in the short-run, the synthesis finds little evidence of clear favorable or unfavorable effects on children; the one exception is for adolescents, where there is more consistent evidence of potential unfavorable behavioral effects.

The final report is due out Winter 2001–2002.

RAND PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Evaluation of School Breakfast and Lunch Programs

This project will evaluate the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and examine their causal impact on numerous nutrition outcomes for children including whether children eat breakfast, clinical outcomes of diet adequacy, and dietary recall information. The differential impact of reduced-price and free SBP and NSLP and the effect of availability and participation will be studied. The potential impact on other family members will be examined for both programs.

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