WASHINGTON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

TERM IMPACTS OF REFORM ON CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.

Well-being should continue to be monitored to establish the longer-favorable effects for adolescents. The study concludes that child children. For both policies, there is more consistent evidence of requirements do not appear to have strong impacts on school-age increase in family income from combining work and welfare. Work associated with financial work incentives, most likely because of the neutral effects of various components of welfare reform on child outcomes are asso-
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The data typically used to support a marijuana gateway effect can be explained as well by a different theory. Although this has implications for U.S. marijuana policy, decisions about relaxing U.S. marijuana laws must necessarily take into account many other factors in addition to whether or not marijuana is a gateway drug.

One area assessed centered around child well-being, in particular the effect of welfare reform on child abuse and neglect, on behav-

ioral problems and school performance, and on health. The synthesis of a small set of studies having follow-up periods that range from two to five years reveals evidence of positive, negative, and neutral effects of various components of welfare reform on child well-being. The most favorable effects on child outcomes are associated with financial work incentives, most likely because of the increase in family income from combining work and welfare. Work requirements do not appear to have strong impacts on school-age children. For both policies, there is more consistent evidence of unfavorable effects for adolescents. The study concludes that child well-being should continue to be monitored to establish the longer-term impacts of reform on child and youth development.

**School-Based Drug Prevention: What Kind of Drug Use Does It Prevent?**

School-based drug prevention is now a nearly universal experience for American youth. RAND’s report compares for the first time the social benefits of school-based prevention’s long-run impacts on a diverse set of substances, finding that the majority of the benefits are due to reduced use of tobacco and alcohol. Analysis has shown that the best programs can reduce use of a wide range of substances. But questions remain regarding how to think about and, hence, fund these programs. RAND’s new report addresses these questions by comparing for the first time the social benefits of school-based prevention programs’ long-run impacts on a diverse set of different substances.

**Making Sense of Test-Based Accountability in Education**

Test-based accountability systems that attach high stakes to standardized test results have raised a number of issues on educational assessment and accountability. Do these high-stakes tests measure student achievement accurately? How can policymakers and educators attach the right consequences to the results of these tests? And what kinds of trade-offs do these testing policies introduce? In this report RAND responds to the growing emphasis on high-stakes testing and offers recommendations for more-effective test-based accountability systems.

**Examining the Cost of Military Child Care**

The military child-care system, the largest system of employer-sponsored child care in the country, has received high marks for providing quality, accessible care for children of military employees. This report will be helpful to policymakers who are interested in the cost of providing high-quality child care to a range of groups, including low-income families. The report presents estimates of the cost of providing care in the Department of Defense (DoD) operated Child Development Centers, Family Child Care (care provided in private homes), and centers operated by outside providers under contract to the DoD.

**UPCOMING RESEARCH IN 2003**

**Obesity Among Kindergartners and First Graders: Relationship To School Performance**

This study examines the relationship among academic achievement, psychological health and obesity in kindergarten-age children. The data analyzed come from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—a nationally representative sample of kindergartners in the U.S. in 1998.

For more information, contact RAND Washington External Affairs at wea@rand.org or 703.413.1100 x5431. RAND is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.