HOT TOPICS

How Has Welfare Reform Affected the Lives of Beneficiaries?

RAND researchers have released the initial results of a two-stage survey of current and former welfare beneficiaries in six California counties since passage of the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program in August 1997. Respondents represent more than half of welfare participants in California. This study is part of an ongoing research series at RAND regarding implementation and outcomes of the CalWORKs legislation.

Researchers interviewed and then evaluated responses from those currently on aid and former recipients. Respondents were asked about, among other things, their knowledge of new CalWORKs rules, attitudes toward the program, work, education or training activities, income, and other matters pertaining to the overall well-being of individuals and families. The overwhelming fraction of welfare recipients report that welfare provides the help they need, that they have been treated fairly, and that recent welfare reforms aimed at helping recipients get jobs and leave welfare are appropriate. About two in five welfare recipients are working, but their earnings are low ($296 per month among workers). Seventy percent live in households under the poverty line. Almost three-quarters of former recipients are working, many full time, and their earnings are correspondingly higher ($818 per month among workers). Their household poverty rates are also much lower (41 percent). Still, 72 percent of welfare leavers live in households relying on some kind of government assistance, health insurance and Food Stamps in particular.

RAND found that 46 percent of the sample reported having a child in child care due to their work, school, or training schedule; only 6 percent reporting needing child care but not receiving it. Seventeen percent of the respondents on aid reported having quit a job in the year prior to the survey because of child care problems versus 7 percent of former recipients. On average, respondents who used child care reported missing less than one day of work in the last 30 days because of child care problems.

Read more: RAND Statewide CalWORKs Evaluation
Read more on results: Results from the First California Health and Social Services Survey

Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention: Improving Quality and Ensuring Positive Outcomes

RAND and other substance abuse prevention researchers have developed a new manual—Getting to Outcomes 2004—for practitioners at state and local institutions who provide adolescent substance abuse prevention services. Created in coordination with practitioners, the manual helps people working at the local level to achieve better results—narrowing the gap between prevention science and prevention practice. For policymakers, this manual will help officials promote more effective prevention programs.

From needs and resources to sustainability, the guide highlights ten questions related to results-based accountability that should be answered in the course of planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programs and provides tools to help practitioners answer these questions.

A new interactive web-based application prototype system, iGTO, is being developed to automate much of the work involved in responding to the accountability questions. It will be completed pending funding.

Read more: Getting To Outcomes 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation
More information is available at: http://www.kithost.net/igt0

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