

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON WISCONSIN WORKS (W-2)

VOLUME 2

May, 1999
(Preliminary)

COMPILED BY VICKY SELKOWE AND PATRICIA NEALE

An online version of this updated booklet and additional information about welfare reform in Wisconsin are available at:

www.wisconsinsfuture.org

We wish to express our appreciation to the Joyce Foundation, the Center for Community Change, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Jane B. Pettit Foundation, the Milwaukee Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Fund for supporting the Institute's work.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the Johnson Foundation for hosting the first two conferences at the Wingspread Conference Center.

Cover photographs are of the north wing of Wingspread and "Amanti", a bronze sculpture by Milton Hebdal near the entrance to Wingspread, and were taken by Thomas Heinz.

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Introduction

Due to the profound alterations in Wisconsin's public welfare policy, Wisconsin has emerged as a testing ground observed by researchers, policymakers, service providers, foundations, and advocates both from Wisconsin and across the nation. Yet when asked how W-2 was working or how low-income families were faring under the new system, the reply, for much of Wisconsin Works (W-2)'s first year was, "it's too soon to tell." As we approach the two-year mark in W-2's implementation, that reply does not resonate with quite as much conviction.

Since W-2's inception, multiple projects have been completed which provide an initial, informational framework and allow for the emergence of a broad research and policy consensus. Many of these research projects have been crucial in documenting and assessing the early months of W-2's implementation and providing much sought-after information to other researchers and advocates as well as to policymakers and members of the media. Nearly 20 projects have either been completed or are underway -- all monitor and evaluate various aspects of W-2 and assess its effectiveness in reaching program objectives.

The first publication of the ***Overview of Current Research on Wisconsin Works (W-2)*** was originally designed for a meeting at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Center and contained similar descriptions of planned statewide monitoring efforts. This publication, ***Volume 2***, reveals several new organizations that are actively engaged in monitoring W-2's impact on families and communities in Wisconsin. It is worth noting that several of the projects planned in 1997 were altered significantly to reflect new research goals and questions, or dropped altogether as rapid caseload declines shifted project priorities and objectives and affected researchers' abilities to gather information.

This updated version of the booklet provides an introduction to and overview of current research and monitoring efforts, and provides key findings for completed projects. In keeping with the spirit of the two conferences held at the Wingspread Center, this booklet is also designed to continue and expand a dialogue on the need for research and advocacy coordination. This collaborative research and monitoring effort is generating a body of information that can assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the new welfare system so that, over time, the design and implementation of W-2 can be reshaped and improved.

This publication is preliminary, and the final version of ***Volume 2*** will be released in early June.

Organization:

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Legislative Council, Wisconsin
8033 Excelsior Drive, Suite A
Madison, Wisconsin 53717
(608) 836-6666

AFSCME represents approximately 66,000 workers in Wisconsin who are organized into more than 400 local unions and chapters. Those local unions are organized into three councils, which provide the framework and resources for collective bargaining, contract administration, legislative representation, political action and other activities.

Contact Person(s):

Richard Abelson, Executive Director of AFSCME Council 48: (414) 344-6868
Jennifer Grondin, AFSCME Legislative Council 11

Project/Research Summary:

Private Profits, Public Needs: The Administration of W-2 in Milwaukee

provides an analysis of W-2's first year of administration, the five agencies that administer W-2 in Milwaukee County, and the agencies' substantial profits under W-2. Analysis of the agencies' contracts shows a collective profit of \$13.5 million. The report concludes that the administration of W-2 in Milwaukee County has allowed private agencies to gain such unprecedented profits in a system with little oversight, accountability or performance standards. In addition, the profit incentive built into the W-2 contracting process has likely had a negative impact on the delivery of other programs (i.e. childcare, medical assistance, Food Stamps).

Target Group:

N/A

Measurements:

Financial information on Milwaukee W-2 contracts obtained from the Department of Workforce Development from September 1997 through August 1998.

Funding and Timeline:

Funded by AFSCME International, this report was made public in October 1998. In May 1999, AFSCME will release a publication detailing the spending of W-2 surplus funds by other Wisconsin counties.

Organization:

Center for Economic Development
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413 Bolton Hall
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201
(414) 229-6155

The Center for Economic Development provides technical assistance, research, public information, and educational services to support the retention and expansion of existing employment and the creation of new economic activity and family-supporting jobs. The UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development strongly believes informed public debate is vital to the development of good social policy. The Center is supported by a grant from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Contact Person(s):

Dr. Marc Levine, Director
Pamela Fendt, Senior Policy Analyst

Project/Research Summary:

Support service programs for low-income families with children have been changed over the past few years by the implementation of welfare reform initiatives. The Wisconsin Head Start State Collaboration Project is sponsoring this research entitled, **Study of Support Service Utilization Among Low-Income Families**, in order to gather insights on access issues affecting the use of support services among low-income families, and to have a better understanding of how families in the Head Start program statewide are faring. The research plan for this project has been approved by the W-2 Management and Evaluation Project.

As defined for this project, support services include: Head Start, subsidized childcare, W-2, Medicaid, and Food Stamps. Three different methodologies were employed to study changes to and use of these programs:

- 1) To document usage patterns, a mail survey was sent to a statistically significant sample of Head Start families in Wisconsin;
- 2) Fifteen interviews with service providers were conducted to provide a programmatic perspective;
- 3) Fourteen focus groups of low-income parents were held at Head Start centers throughout the states. The focus groups were designed to address in more detail the arrangements families are making for their children in an era when more parents are working, or participating in welfare work activities, and to explore reasons for the low usage rates for the state's childcare subsidy.

Target Group:

The research gathered information from Head Start parents in focus groups at 14 different Head Start centers throughout the state. Service providers and administrators from various statewide programs were also involved in the study.

Measurements:

The study's focus groups gather detailed information about the reasons for use and non-use of support service programs. Interviews will also be conducted with 15 service providers and administrators from Head Start locations across the state to ensure that a programmatic perspective on service utilization is measured. A written survey will also be mailed to a sample of Head Start families throughout the state.

Project Funding and Timeline:

The project is funded through Wisconsin Head Start. Release of the report is scheduled for June 1999.

Organization:

Department of Workforce Development
State of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 7935
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7935
(608) 266-6722

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is a state agency of approximately 2,400 employees located throughout Wisconsin. DWD through direct or contracted services provides a variety of services to assist employers, employees and job applicants in meeting their employment needs. Major DWD programs include Job Service, the Job Training Partnership Act, Apprenticeship, Unemployment Insurance, Workers Compensation, Vocational Rehabilitation, Economic Support, and Equal Rights and Labor Standards.

Contact Person:

Jan Van Vleck, Special Assistant to the Secretary

Project/Research Summary:

Survey of Those Leaving AFDC or W-2, January to March 1998, Preliminary Report, was the first in a series of "leavers" reports and studied those who left welfare during the first quarter of 1998. Phone interviews were conducted with 375 individuals who left either AFDC or W-2 and did not return to the welfare program. The study was designed to provide policy makers and others with empirical information and analysis on welfare recipients who move out of the welfare system to ascertain how these families are fairing. Three more quarterly surveys will be conducted along with a review of administrative data for those who return to welfare.

Key Findings:

- 1) 62% of leavers were employed at the time of the interview; 38% were unemployed when interviewed -- 17% having never been employed since leaving welfare;
- 2) The average wage earned by working leavers was \$7.42/hour, though 58% of those working were employed 40 hours or more per week; 19% had 29 or fewer hours per week;
- 3) When asked to describe their financial condition, 68% of leavers said they were "just barely making it from day to day," and 48% said they had more money off welfare than before.

Target Group:

A random sample of 547 individuals was drawn from the 3,564 individuals who left AFDC or W-2 during the first quarter of 1998 and did not return to welfare. Of these, 375 interviews were completed.

Measurements:

Survey interviews were conducted by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory and by the Office of Quality Assurance, Division of Economic Support for DWD. Most interviews were done by phone, but efforts were made to interview leavers on a face-to-face basis if phone contact could not be made. The survey instrument contained detailed questions on employment status, wages earned, transportation, general quality of life since leaving welfare, reasons for not working, etc., as well as extensive demographic information. The survey also asked about reasons for no longer being on welfare, receipt of any outside support (including entitlement programs, child support and housing subsidies), and childcare usage.

Funding/Timeline:

The study was funded by the Department of Workforce Development and was conducted jointly by the Department and the University of Wisconsin's Survey Research Laboratory. The report was released in January 1999 and is available online at: www.dwd.state.wi.us.

Organization:

Employment and Training Institute
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
161 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 6000
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203
(414) 227-3380

The Employment and Training Institute of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee focuses on the employment and education needs of low-income workers in Wisconsin through applied research, program and policy development, and technical assistance. The Institute works with local and state governments, community organizations and national agencies to generate research and policy papers on interrelationships between training programs, labor market trends, educational programs and welfare policies.

Contact Person(s):

John Pawasarat, Director
Lois Quinn, Senior Research Scientist

Project/Research Summary:

Removing Barriers to Employment: The Childcare-Jobs Equation, released in May 1998, examines the use of childcare subsidies by low-income parents in Milwaukee County between January 1996 and September 1997. The study also explores the experience of adults providing provisional, certified and licensed childcare in Milwaukee County to gauge income levels for this type of work.

In an earlier study, the Institute identified a lack of childcare as a primary barrier to employment for central city Milwaukee female job seekers. More recent assessments of AFDC mothers indicate that they need significant help finding and paying for childcare.

Key Findings:

- 1) While the Milwaukee County AFDC caseload declined rapidly in 1996 and 1997, receipt of childcare subsidies for low-income families did not rise at a comparable rate;
- 2) While childcare funds were increased to include non-welfare, "working poor" families, very few non-welfare families actually received Wisconsin childcare subsidies. Only 583 of the estimated 22,000 low-income Milwaukee County families with children who were not receiving AFDC, Food Stamps, or Medicaid in December 1995, were receiving childcare subsidies in January 1996;
- 3) The cost of providing subsidized childcare increased as more AFDC families were required to work during 1996 and 1997, with costs per family rising from an average of \$513 per family in 1996 to \$763 per family in 1997.

Target Group:

Data on low-income families in Milwaukee County from early 1996 to late 1997 were used to assess the use and type of childcare subsidized in the county.

Measurements:

This report relied upon Milwaukee County data on utilization of childcare subsidies from January 1996 through September 1997. The report also contained an analysis of payments to nearly 3,000 providers of childcare and more than 30,000 childcare placements, as well as a review of AFDC, Food Stamp and medical assistance records in 1995, 1996, and 1997.

Funding and Timeline:

This study was funded in part by the Helen Bader Foundation and the Milwaukee Foundation. This report is available on the Institute's website: www.uwm.edu/DEPT/ETI

Organization:

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
161 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 6000
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203
(414) 227-3380

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Contact Person(s):

John Pawasarat, Director
Lois Quinn, Senior Research Scientist

Project/Research Summary:

Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment: Assessing Driver's License and Vehicle Ownership Patterns of Low-Income Populations was released in July 1998. This study provides a "census" of transportation problems facing low-income Milwaukee residents using data from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation combined with data on the welfare status of more than 90,000 individuals in Milwaukee County.

For most single parents who are expected to work full-time under current welfare initiatives, use of a car is the most practical means of transportation. Transportation barriers – particularly for single parents lacking a family car or a valid driver's license – can contribute to job retention problems.

Key Findings:

- 1) Only 12% of Milwaukee county welfare households own a car; 22% either owned a vehicle or had another family member in the household who owned a car;
- 2) Of the single parents on AFDC in December 1995 (and expected to work), 25% had a valid driver's license, and 18% had no license and a suspension or revocation on record;
- 3) Nearly two-thirds (63%) of AFDC participants with a valid driver's license in December 1995 left AFDC by June 1997, compared to 44% of participants without a driver's license.

Target Group:

This look at the transportation problems facing low-income Milwaukee County residents was developed by matching administrative data from several sources with the welfare status of 93,908 Milwaukee County residents.

Measurements:

The report uses Wisconsin Department of Transportation driver's license records and contains analysis of 1992-1996 suspensions and revocations. The report also matched driver's license and vehicle registration records to determine car ownership patterns. The Institute also relied upon census data from Milwaukee Public Schools and from the U.S. Census to ascertain driver's license and suspension rates for teenagers by zip code, central city and suburban areas.

Funding and Timeline:

Funding for this project was provided in part by the Helen Bader Foundation, the Milwaukee Foundation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The report is available on the Institute's website: www.uwm.edu/Dept/ETI

Organization:

Forward Service Corporation
Manitowoc Job Center
3733 Dewey Street
Manitowoc, Wisconsin 54220
(920) 683-2888

Forward Service Corporation is a private, nonprofit corporation established in 1979 to administer federal and state-funded programs that provide job training and placement services to unemployed and economically disadvantaged adults and youth. In Manitowoc, Forward Service is presently operating the W-2, Food Stamp and Children First work programs.

Contact Person(s):

Rose Ebert, Assistant Program Manager

Project/Research Summary:

This survey of former AFDC and W-2 participants who have left the system since January 1997, was designed to gauge the need for follow-up services to assist these individuals and monitor their success or hardships relating to employment issues once cash assistance ended. The Manitowoc Forward Service Corporation staff compiled names and addresses of participants who received AFDC and/or W-2 services from January 1997 through September 1998, and sent surveys to 151 participants. Phone surveys were completed by 40 individuals. Survey results have been used primarily as a means of linking participants to follow-up services and referring to local community resources.

Key Findings:

- 1) 84% of those responding are employed, with 54% employed in the same job they had upon leaving the welfare system;
- 2) Nearly half are not receiving health insurance benefits from their employer;
- 3) Average wages are \$6.82/hour;
- 4) Only 63% of those filing for taxes in 1997 filed for EITC.

Target Group:

Former AFDC/W-2 participants who left the welfare system as far back as January 1997, were included in the research.

Measurements:

Survey instruments designed by the Forward Service Corporation and mailed to participants. No financial incentive for completion of the survey was provided.

Funding and Timeline:

Surveys were completed during fall 1998 and the results were made available in October 1998. Funding was provided through the Manitowoc Job Center.

Organization:

The Hudson Institute

P.O. Box 26-919
Indianapolis, Indiana 46226
(317) 549-4138

The Hudson Institute

Three South Pinckney Street, Suite 724
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 251-8162

The Hudson Institute is a private, not-for-profit, nonpartisan research organization founded in 1961. The Institute provides analysis of and makes recommendations on a variety of public policies for business and government executives and for the general public.

Contact Person(s):

Rebecca Swartz (608) 251-8162

Project/Research Summary:

In collaboration with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., the Hudson Institute is conducting a survey of former AFDC recipients in Milwaukee, which focuses on the first six months of W-2's implementation, describing the transition process and how former AFDC participants perceived and experienced this transition period.

Generally, this project explores the phenomenon of declining welfare caseloads in Milwaukee County by examining the trajectory of diverted and former recipients as they transitioned from AFDC to W-2 and/or left the welfare caseload altogether. The project also compares the employment rates of those who converted to W-2 to those who did not make the conversion.

Target Group:

Individuals on AFDC in Milwaukee during August 1997, the month prior to W-2's statewide implementation, were surveyed. A sample size of 400 was drawn randomly using the Department of Workforce Development's CARES system. A total of 296 surveys, (74% of the total sample), were completed.

Measurements:

Survey participation was voluntary and approximately 30 minutes in length. Questions focused on respondents' experiences in the transition process, their current usage of social programs, work history and experience, and their impressions of the W-2 program and implementation process.

Funding and Timeline:

The study was fully funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Casey Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation and the Clark Foundation. The survey tracks individuals from August 1997 through December 1998. Release of this report is planned for early June 1999.

Organization:

Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee
201 South Hawley Court
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53214
(414) 777-0483

Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, Inc. is a nonprofit, privately funded organization that exists to prevent and eliminate hunger. Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee accomplishes this mission by providing support for hunger relief organizations, promoting sound social policy, and supporting community and economic development initiatives related to food security. Hunger Task Force promotes the idea that all people should have dignified access to food obtained through normal means.

Contact Person(s):

Sherri Kay, Executive Director
Jon Janowski, Director of Advocacy

Project/Research Summary:

Initial Findings on the Impact of Wisconsin Works (W-2) on Food Security and Employment contains the findings of a two-part survey which focuses on employment and hunger issues, as well as involvement with the W-2 program. The goal of the survey was to document the work search and work experiences of poor people in Milwaukee, focusing on how employment and/or participation in W-2 affected families' food security.

Key Findings:

Surveys collected from more than 900 low-income households at food pantries and meal programs reveal that:

- 1) 57% of respondents reported at least one household member working regularly;
- 2) Of those surveyed, only 56% were receiving Food Stamps;
- 3) Only 30% of the 632 interviewed were part of the W-2 program;
- 4) 22% no longer receive cash benefits.

Target Group:

Families seeking assistance from Milwaukee-area food pantries and/or meal programs. Both W-2 and non-W-2 families were surveyed.

Measurements:

Surveys were administered orally at random food pantry and meal programs throughout Milwaukee; 632 surveys focusing on food security issues and W-2 participation were collected; of which 305 respondents completed the second part of the survey examining employment and work search experience of low-income households.

Funding and Timeline:

This report was released in July 1998 and was funded by the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee in cooperation with the Hunger Action Team.

Organization:

The Institute for Research on Poverty
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608) 262-6358

The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) is a national center for research on the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. IRP is nonprofit and nonpartisan, and is one of two centers designated as a National Poverty Research Center by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact Person(s):

Maria Cancian, Assistant Professor of Public Affairs and Social Work
Thomas Kaplan, IRP Senior Scientist
Daniel Meyer, Associate Professor of Social Work

Project/Research Summary:

This research group's two-part study, *Evaluating the Labor Market Impacts of W-2*, employs a pre-post longitudinal design to examine program outcomes in Wisconsin before and after W-2's implementation. The research focuses primarily on labor force participation, and the income and occupational trajectories of low-income workers, AFDC recipients, and W-2 participants during a period ranging from three to seven years.

Target Group:

The target research population will consist of three groups. These include a statewide sample of low-income families who are not W-2 participants, W-2 participants and former W-2/AFDC participants. In previous research, a 10% sample of the state welfare caseload was utilized. That sample size may be expanded to 50% for portions of this study to more closely examine smaller subgroups.

Measurements:

The first phase of the study will examine the monthly income changes among low-income workers and AFDC recipients for a three-year period (from 1990 to 1992), prior to Pay-For-Performance. The second phase of the study will examine these same income changes between low-income workers and W-2 participants for three years under W-2. An evaluation and comparison of pre-post income and occupational trajectories for all groups will follow.

The primary sources of data will consist of administrative information on quarterly income, including that from public assistance programs, and employment information obtained from the Department of Workforce Development, possibly merged with information from the Department of Revenue. Intervening factors to be examined

include the socio-demographic characteristics of each family, such as education and family size and structure, geographic differences, and features of the local labor market.

Funding and Timeline:

This project is fully funded, primarily by the Joyce Foundation. Early findings are expected in late September 1999. Current research projects and completed reports are available online at: www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp

Organization:

The Institute for Research on Poverty
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608) 262-6358

The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) is a national center for research on the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. IRP is nonprofit and nonpartisan, and is one of two centers designated as a National Poverty Research Center by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact Person(s):

Maria Cancian, Assistant Professor of Public Affairs and Social Work
Daniel Meyer, Associate Professor of Social Work
Emma Casper, Project Manager

Project/Research Summary:

In November 1997, IRP was awarded a contract by the State of Wisconsin to evaluate the W-2 Child Support Waiver Demonstration which has created two groups of W-2 participants: those who are receiving either 40% of their child support or \$50, whichever is greater, and those who are getting their full child support payments.

Prior to W-2, welfare families received \$50 of child support per month in addition to their AFDC checks, while the remainder of their child support went to public agencies as partial reimbursement for welfare expenditures. The child support component of W-2 started in October 1997 as part of the new waiver demonstration program, with the federal government requiring that the program be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Target Group:

The target research population consists of two groups. The control group of 4,000 receives either 40% of the child support paid or \$50, whichever is greater, and a treatment group of 4,000 plus all others participating in W-2 will receive their full child support payments.

Measurements:

The IRP evaluation plan is composed of three components:

- 1) Examination of the waiver's implementation.
- 2) An impact analysis of eight policy impact areas using administrative data and a 50-minute survey of a random sample of both groups. This component will provide an analysis of the patterns and changes between the treatment and control groups with regard to child support collections, child support orders and paternity establishment, W-2 and related program costs, resident and non-resident parents, child well-being, non-resident parent earnings, and formal versus informal child support payments.
- 3) As part of the non-experimental portion of the project, Wisconsin's waiver demonstration will be compared with programs in other states, including the Parent's Fair Share Experiment, Wisconsin AFDC cases, and earlier studies of this group in Wisconsin. This component will also include in-depth interviews with selected cases.

Funding and Timeline:

This IRP project is funded by the State of Wisconsin and the federal government. A four-year evaluation is planned. Preliminary findings are expected in the summer of 1999.

Organization:

The Institute for Research on Poverty

University of Wisconsin-Madison
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608) 262-6358

The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) is a national center for research on the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. IRP is nonprofit and nonpartisan, and is one of two centers designated as a National Poverty Research Center by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact Person(s):

Irving Piliavin, Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Social Work
Mark Courtney, Assistant Professor of Social Work

Project/Research Summary:

This group is currently pursuing two research projects. Both involve longitudinal studies on the impact of welfare reform in Wisconsin and how W-2 families and children have been affected. The first project, ***The Impact of Welfare Reform on Families***, is a pilot study in Dane County and is the forerunner of the second project, ***What Happens to Families Under Wisconsin Works***, which surveys families that come in contact with W-2 agencies in Milwaukee.

The Dane County project follows the experiences of 200 participants in W-2: two-thirds were transferred from AFDC, one-third subsequently entered W-2. Participants are interviewed twice, with the second interview taking place one year after the first interview.

The Milwaukee County project follows 200 families in each of the five W-2 regions who are randomly selected from those who contact a W-2 agency – including those who choose not to apply and those that are immediately diverted. They are asked to complete two interviews, twelve months apart.

Both studies will provide information on the economic and personal circumstances of W-2 participants, as well as those who leave W-2, and will explore the work experience and well-being of these families.

Target Group:

The first study's sample consists of 200 families from Dane County. Study participants are obtained through the Dane County Department of Human Services. For the second Milwaukee-focused project, the total representative sample will consist of 1,000 families. Potential participant families for this study will be contacted as they apply for W-2.

Measurements:

Both studies will use information collected from formal interviews with families and administrative data sources that indicate how families use public assistance programs and health and social services. Using this information, the projects will examine the impact of welfare reform initiatives by documenting families' experiences on numerous dimensions during the period of observation. The duration of this study is five years. The Dane County study will also utilize qualitative information obtained from interviews with participants and matched with administrative data.

Funding and Timeline:

The Dane County project is funded through core resources provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and by the Graduate School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The first round of Dane County interviews was completed in April 1999. Second interviews will take place in the second half of 1999, and preliminary results are expected from the Dane County project in late 1999. The Milwaukee project is funded by two grants, one from the Joyce Foundation, the other from the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Milwaukee interviews began in March 1999.

Organization:

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future

1717 South 12th Street Suite 203
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204
(414) 384-9094

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future (IWF) is a statewide policy research and community education center. IWF was established in 1994 by a broad coalition of concerned citizens, labor organizations, academics, professionals, religious leaders and advocacy groups. Its mission is to inform Wisconsin residents about issues and policies that affect their lives and to encourage broader citizen involvement in public policy debates and decision making.

Contact Person(s):

Karen Royster, Executive Director
Vicky Selkove, W-2 Project Coordinator
Thomas Moore, Research Coordinator

Project/Research Summary:

The W-2 Job Path: An Analysis of the Employment Trajectory of W-2

Participants in Milwaukee was released in July 1998 and contains the results of 700 survey interviews with W-2 participants and 300 surveys from local employers. The survey identifies the gap between the education and skill levels required by employers and the skills and training of the W-2 population. In addition, the study's analysis of W-2 concludes that the program fails to adequately address this "skills gap," instead placing workers with marginal skills in "make-work" jobs without additional training.

Key Findings:

- 1) Two-thirds of all participants interviewed were not receiving training in any of the high priority areas listed in the W-2 design;
- 2) Unsubsidized ("job-ready") participants are not highly skilled -- 38% have not completed high school;
- 3) Participants in all placement categories were not informed about support service or entitlement programs – more than 75% of unsubsidized respondents were not receiving childcare assistance, and 32% of subsidized respondents were not receiving medical assistance.

Target Groups:

W-2 participants in one of the four placement categories were interviewed at Milwaukee's five

W-2 agencies. A broad sample of Milwaukee area businesses were surveyed, reflecting a range of business sizes and types willing to assess their education and training needs and requirements.

Measurements:

A one-page intake form was developed for use by trained (paid) interviewers at Milwaukee's W-2 agencies. Most interviews were conducted outside the buildings, as access inside was limited. The intake form gathered basic demographic information, as well as W-2 placements, receipt of support services and entitlements, and detailed data on the nature of the W-2 job and training placements or unsubsidized work activity. Local employers were surveyed through a two-page mail survey designed by IWF and sent through the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area Chamber of Commerce and Milwaukee Area Technical College.

Funding and Timeline:

This project, supported by the Joyce Foundation and the Center for Community Change, was released in July 1998.

Organization:

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future

1717 South 12th Street Suite 203
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204
(414) 384-9094

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future (IWF) is a statewide policy research and community education center. IWF was established in 1994 by a broad coalition of concerned citizens, labor organizations, academics, professionals, religious leaders and advocacy groups. Its mission is to inform Wisconsin residents about issues and policies that affect their lives and to encourage broader citizen involvement in public policy debates and decision making.

Contact Person(s):

Karen Royster, Executive Director
Vicky Selkove, W-2 Project Coordinator
Thomas Moore, Research Coordinator

Project/Research Summary:

Transitions to W-2: The First Six Months of Welfare Replacement, was a collaborative effort between Legal Action of Wisconsin, Community Advocates and United Cerebral Palsy of Southeastern Wisconsin. The report compiled information from W-2 program participants to track the impact of W-2 during the program's implementation period from September 1997 through June 1998. Information from 191 intake forms was collected by Community Advocates and Legal Action over a four-month period.

Key Findings:

- 1) Of the 73% of women turned away from W-2, 80% were unemployed at the time and 38% were both unemployed and had only a grade school education;
- 2) A significant number of those turned away were not informed about support services and entitlement programs -- 92% were not told about childcare assistance, 97% were not informed about transportation assistance;
- 3) Of those deemed "job ready," 49% were unemployed at the time of application, and those working worked an average of 28 hours a week.

Target Groups:

Low-income families seeking administrative, legal or social service assistance from Community Advocates or Legal Action of Wisconsin during a four-month period beginning December 1998, were interviewed.

Measurements:

A one-page intake survey was designed in collaboration with Community Advocates and Legal Action of Wisconsin to capture information about clients who were turned away from W-2 agencies, or clients who were declared "job ready" and thereby lost cash benefits. Individuals who completed the survey had contacted either Community Advocates or Legal Action to seek help in responding to administrative problems in the W-2 system.

Funding and Timeline:

This project was supported by the Center for Community Change, the Joyce Foundation, and the Jane B. Pettit Foundation.

Organization:

La Crosse County W-2 Research Consortium

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
1725 State Street
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

The La Crosse County W-2 Research Consortium was formed in response to a request from the La Crosse County Human Services Department and the United Way of the La Crosse Area, Inc., to design and implement a W-2 research project that addresses the interests of the local human service community. The Consortium is composed of faculty from three universities and colleges.

Contact Person(s):

Gloria Fennell, Northland Community Services, Inc.: (715) 836-5366
Donell Kerns, Continuing Education and Extension, UW-La Crosse: (608) 785-6500
Hope Hagar, Department of Social Work, UW-La Crosse
Nancy Krug, Department of Sociology, Viterbo College
Vicki Moss, School of Nursing, Viterbo College
Debra Daehn Zellmer, Department of Sociology, Viterbo College

Project/Research Summary:

The Consortium is conducting a longitudinal study to explore how individuals and families are faring since the onset of W-2. The study examines the effect W-2 has had on the personal lives and family situations of La Crosse County participants. The study is in the process of collecting extensive qualitative and quantitative information from 56 families who received cash benefits either from AFDC or W-2 in La Crosse County.

In addition to basic demographic information, such as household composition and education, researchers are collecting information on employment history, attitudes toward work, self-assessment of employment skills, job training goals and participation in job training activities, economic well-being, transportation, childcare arrangements, health care use and insurance coverage, parenting experiences and behavior, the children's well-being, and self-perceptions.

Target Group:

The study's sample consists of individuals and families who reside in La Crosse County and were receiving cash benefits from either AFDC or W-2. A sample of 150 participants was obtained from the La Crosse County Human Services Department and 56 agreed to participate in the yearlong interview process. Among families have been included, which may create an opportunity to examine the impact of W-2 on this population specifically.

Measurements:

The first round of in-depth interviews has been conducted. Primary care parents will complete a questionnaire regarding their children. The interview protocol and parent questionnaire was adapted from the survey instrument used in the New Hope Project in Milwaukee. Administrative data from the County is also being used to ascertain the families' use of financial and social services, as well as child attendance and performance in school, pre-school, or childcare settings.

The interviews and questionnaires elicit responses that cross issue and content areas. The second round of interviews is set to begin in Spring 1999. The same recipients will be re-interviewed and the same administrative data sources will be used. Participants were offered \$10 stipends for their participation in the first interview and \$40 if they also participate in the second round of interviews. Mileage reimbursement and childcare are also provided to participants.

Funding and Timeline:

Funding was provided by the United Way of La Crosse and by the La Crosse County Community Foundation and covered only compensation for participants and data analysis costs. Second interviews with participating clients will be complete by mid-1999, with results anticipated near the end of the year.

Organization:

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

Three Park Avenue, 32nd Floor
New York City, New York 10016
(212) 532-3200

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit social policy research organization founded in 1974 and located in New York City and San Francisco. Its mission is to design and rigorously field-test promising education and employment-related programs aimed at improving the well-being of disadvantaged adults and youth and to provide policymakers and practitioners with reliable evidence of the effectiveness of social programs.

Contact Person:

Fred Doolittle, Vice President and Deputy Director of the Education, Children and Youth Department

Project/Research Summary:

This study, examining the W-2 implementation in Milwaukee, is a three-year project. The project focuses largely on program implementation with special interest on relations between government agencies and service providers, assessment of participants for specific W-2 placement categories, the experiences of participants in the program, and participant progress up W-2's "employment ladder" -- leading to eventual departure from the program. The research aims to describe the program as implemented, to ensure that a clear record of early program administration and function are kept.

The project documents:

- 1) The development of the new administrative structure needed for W-2 from the state, county, and W-2 agency staff perspective;
- 2) Development of procedures to handle "tough cases,"
- 3) Methods by which the state and county monitor and manage service provider performance and allocate funding in the new system.

The project will provide briefings on early findings for the service providers, county Private Industry Council and the state.

Target Group:

Key stakeholders in W-2's Milwaukee implementation: agency staff, community representatives, program participants, etc.

Measurements:

The project includes document review, on-going field research, a consultative process with various representatives in the Milwaukee community, focus groups with program participants, a staff survey, and program participation analysis for a sample of participants. The project also develops an analytic framework by building a “model” of the intermediate steps the W-2 program intends to produce.

Funding and Timeline:

This project is funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The first report is expected by fall 1999, with a follow-up report due in early 2001.

Organization:

The New Hope Project
623 North 35th Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208
(414) 342-3338

New Hope is a limited-term, anti-poverty demonstration project designed to help people leave poverty through work. The project was designed to test the notion that individuals in poverty will choose work over welfare when supports are provided to ensure income above the poverty line. The project also aimed to provide credible information to policymakers on the implementation, effectiveness, and costs of the New Hope approach.

Contact Person:

Julie Kerksick, Executive Director

Project/Research Summary:

New Hope is a privately operated anti-poverty welfare-to-work experiment that predated W-2 and served a diverse group of low-income workers in two of Milwaukee's neighborhoods. The project was initiated in August 1994 and ended in December 1998, and included 1,362 low-income adults. The project was based on an experimental research design.

The New Hope offer consisted of assistance in looking for work and a guaranteed job of last resort, a Community Service job, as well as a wage supplement. The offer also included affordable health insurance and childcare. In addition to economic support, project group participants also had access to counseling services from agency case managers. The project group was the only group to receive the New Hope offer.

Key Findings:

- 1) Compared to the control group, New Hope participants experienced significant increases in duration of employment, earnings and income;
- 2) More than 60% of previously-unemployed participants who used Community Service Jobs were employed in unsubsidized jobs by the end of their first two years in the program;
- 3) Participants were significantly more likely to utilize health care and childcare than the control group and less likely to use traditional welfare. In addition, they experienced less stress about health matters;
- 4) There were other positive effects for the New Hope program children, including improved reports from teachers.

Target Group:

The project operated in two neighborhoods south and west of downtown Milwaukee in the zip code areas 53204 and 53208. Individuals 18 years or older, employed, unemployed, or on welfare, in a household below 150% of poverty level and who were willing to work at least 30 hours a week were eligible. Between August 1994 and December 1995, project participants were recruited from these areas during several meetings and randomly assigned to a project group or a control group. A total of 678 participants and their households were entitled to New Hope benefits and their outcomes and experiences were compared to the control group of 679.

Measurements:

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation was subcontracted to analyze the project. Longitudinal research tracked participants of both groups in terms of household income and employment using data from the State of Wisconsin's Welfare and Unemployment Insurance systems, as well as data from AFDC/W-2, Food Stamp and Medicaid databases. The most current evaluation report also contains details on employment histories, job characteristics and income sources, and measures access to health care, material hardship, job security, and effects on children and families. Previous reports are available that present findings on recruitment, program operations, participation patterns and participant characteristics. A future report will cover the last year of the program and two further years of follow-up.

Funding and Timeline:

The New Hope Project is supported by funds obtained through a number of public and private sources. These include the Rockefeller Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Helen Bader Foundation, as well as other private foundations and the State of Wisconsin, the U.S. Government, and the City of Milwaukee. The most recent evaluation report was released in April 1999.

Organization:

Portage County Health and Human Services Department

817 Whiting Avenue
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481
(715) 345-5860

Portage County Health and Human Services is a consolidated agency representing social services, the health department and mental health services as authorized under Wisconsin Statutes 51.42. The agency's mission is to assist county residents in meeting their physical and psychological health needs, economic, social and environmental needs.

Contact Person:

Lauri M. Rockman, Family and Employment Support Division Coordinator

Project/Research Summary:

Through the Community Response Team, the Portage County Health and Human Services (PCHHS) Department has coordinated three projects to assess the service needs of W-2 participants and gaps in areas of childcare, transportation, and employment. The projects seek to strengthen W-2 by improving the quality and quantity of services available in Portage County.

The projects include:

- 1) A monitoring tool that has been used to collect baseline information about families since December 1995 and identify service patterns before and after the implementation of W-2. The data are used by the Portage County Community Response Team to monitor trends that may be affecting at-risk families.
- 2) A Family Needs Assessment survey was conducted by the research firm, Itzkowitz and Associates. The survey was completed by 61 families who were receiving economic support from PCHHS, but who left prior to the implementation of W-2. Respondents were asked questions concerning their educational history, work and work transportation issues, family stress, and disability. Respondents were also asked what would improve their family life.
- 3) A longitudinal study of 12 families who were on AFDC in 1996 will be conducted by Itzkowitz and Associates. Initial interviews are complete and these same families will be re-interviewed every six months over the next three years. Interview questions focus on the experiences of families participating in W-2. The main issues covered include employment, training and educational experiences, childcare access, and transportation availability.

Target Groups:

The monitoring tool collects information from a number of service providers, including housing assistance, social services, emergency relief, health care, utilities, childcare, child welfare issues, crime prevention, and employment providers. The Family Needs Assessment survey focuses on all of the families in Portage County who left the welfare rolls prior to the implementation of W-2.

Funding and Timeline:

Data collection using the monitoring tool is ongoing. Data summaries are available from December 1995 through December 1998. The Family Needs Assessment survey results were released in September 1998. Begun in 1997, the longitudinal study of twelve families will continue for a total of three years. Support for these last three projects is obtained through Portage County W-2 funds and other agency funding.

Organization:

School of Architecture and Urban Planning

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-0413
(414) 229-5584

The School of Architecture and Urban Planning has the only accredited architecture program in the State of Wisconsin. The school has been designated a University of Wisconsin System “Center of Excellence,” and is one of only 17 Ph.D. programs in architecture and urban planning in the nation. .

Contact Person:

Dr. Sherry Ahrentzen, Professor, Department of Architecture

Project/Research Summary:

A spring 1998 interview survey of nonprofit community organizations in the Milwaukee area indicated a growing concern among many social service and housing providers that W-2 was negatively affecting participants’ housing situations. Anecdotal evidence and newspaper stories have pointed to increased homelessness, “doubling-up,” as well as positive accounts of increased household stability and quieter neighborhoods. However, there is little concrete, empirical information about the housing needs of participants and how W-2 might be affecting housing for participants. This project will assess the housing needs of participants and the implications W-2 has on housing these families in the city of Milwaukee, as well as provide concrete planning/design recommendations for the development of appropriate, affordable housing that addresses these needs.

Measurements:

The project began with a Needs Assessment that involved an extensive search and analysis of relevant research, and government and demonstration projects that addressed housing and neighborhood impacts on welfare reform initiatives. This included interviews with service providers, nonprofit housing developers, researchers, architects and others for similar assessments.

Two pertinent issues were identified after these interviews:

- 1) The consequences of “doubling-up” (i.e. two or more families in one dwelling unit as a result of W-2 or other related crisis situations. From these analyses and comparisons, a “white paper” will be developed that proposes how housing and service providers might avoid, or at least lessen, the negative consequences of doubling-up. In addition, there will be an analysis of shared housing situations that are serving as a transitional means of support for families under particular social, economic, and housing design circumstances.

- 2) An analysis of housing services that support self-sufficiency programs for those W-2 participants interested in or involved in self-employment to understand the ways in which housing and immediate neighborhood environs can support home-based work for low-income residents. Residents of two public housing developments in the City of Milwaukee are being interviewed to get more information about the types of self-employment currently existing and of interest to residents, and the ways in which housing and program services can be supportive of these endeavors. Based on the analysis of these findings, the study will present recommendations.

Funding and Timeline:

The project is being conducted through the Milwaukee Community Outreach Partnership Center and is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Organization:

**School of Social Work and
Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI)**

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413 Enderis Hall
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201
(414) 229-5634

The Social Work Program in the School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, provides training for 355 graduate students and 136 undergraduate students. The program's mission is to provide scholarly leadership for the profession of social work through teaching, research and service. The Social Work Programs focus on metropolitan social problems, with a commitment to social and economic justice, cultural diversity, and the empowerment of the school's individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to effect change.

Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
P.O. Box 2000
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53141
(414) 595-2147

Established in 1994, the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI) is a statewide network of academics, members of the poverty community, and others in 10 Wisconsin communities striving to educate the general public about poverty-related issues.

Contact Person(s):

Robert Magill, Professor of Social Work

Project/Research Summary:

This research project examines what effect, if any, welfare reform has had on Milwaukee's food pantries, meal programs, and on the clients of these programs. Research focused on the first four months of W-2's phased implementation in the City of Milwaukee.

Key Findings:

- 1) Staff at food pantries and meal programs noted a significant increase in the use of food programs since W-2's implementation;
- 2) Food program workers report serving more mothers with young children, more elderly and more working poor since the beginning of comprehensive welfare reform;
- 3) There is widespread concern over the welfare and safety of young children;
- 4) Workers feel that W-2 is making unrealistic demands on some clients. Pantry staff feel that many of their clients do not understand W-2 and have a hard time reaching their workers;

- 5) Pantry and meal program staff identify a lack of adequate education and training as a serious problem for their clients.

Target Group:

With assistance from the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, a list of agencies that provide meal programs and food pantries was compiled. A sample of programs and pantries was created to represent the City of Milwaukee's different geographic areas. A total of 23 meal programs and food pantries were surveyed.

Measurements:

Administrative and program planning data obtained from in-depth interviews with staff from each of the pantries and meal programs were examined. The demand for and availability of services at each site were measured by gathering data on clients, the number of requests for services, the number of individuals turned away, increased requests for services, as well as any program changes implemented by the pantry or program due to W-2's implementation.

Funding and Timeline:

This project was funded and sponsored by WPPEI. Meal program and pantry surveys were conducted during the late fall of 1997 through early winter 1998. Staff members at the seven selected meal programs were interviewed between December and January 1998. Findings were made available in July 1998.

Organization:

United Way of Dane County

2059 Atwood Avenue

P.O. Box 7548

Madison, Wisconsin 53707

(608) 246-4350

The United Way of Dane County is an independent, volunteer-driven, fund-raising and community problem solving organization. Activities are overseen by a volunteer board of directors whose 35 members represent local businesses, government entities, unions and the community.

Contact Person:

Sandra Erickson, Director of Planning and Community Building

Project/Research Summary:

The United Way of Dane County coordinates a **City, County, United Way and School District Community Assessment Report**, which includes a recently developed **Indicators of Community Well-Being** database. Begun in 1986, this biennial assessment tool has been used to gather and report information on a number of health and human service needs and socio-demographic subgroups in Dane County to help develop policy and allocate resources.

Information from Dane County's Department of Human Services on W-2 is included as a separate chapter of the *Community Assessment Report*. Data from 1995 serve as the baseline. The **Indicators of Community Well-Being** identifies trends in the social, mental and physical health of the county through analysis of data collected on an ongoing basis by a variety of organizations. Data that track the impact of welfare reform are included, with data available through the end of 1998. The reports enable funders individually and collectively to establish strategic direction and make decisions based on a common foundation of data.

Target Group:

Population subgroups that include the elderly, youth, and W-2 participants, using countywide social, economic and health data.

Measurements:

The chapter focusing exclusively on W-2 is based on information obtained from Dane County Department of Human Services reports. The most recent Dane County report contains statistical profiles of W-2 participants and an analysis of caseload trends. Using data from existing organizations, the **Indicators of Community Well-Being** measures and tracks changing patterns in county basic needs (such as requests for shelter and food pantry referrals), child welfare, crime, education, employment (including W-2 job placements), health, and service provision for the elderly.

Funding and Timeline:

This project is in collaboration with other Dane County funders who provide staff and limited financial resources. An updated Community Assessment document will be available in the fall of 1999 and will contain recent W-2 information.

Organization:

Wisconsin Catholic Conference

30 West Mifflin Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 257-0004

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) was founded in 1969 by the Bishops of Wisconsin. The WCC provides a specifically Catholic perspective on state and federal public policy debates, as well as on state and local issues affecting its five dioceses.

Contact Person(s):

John Huebscher, Executive Director, WCC
Tom Schneider, Executive Director, Catholic Charities
Barbara Barnard, Project Director

Project/Research Summary:

Raising Children in a World of Work Not Welfare studied the capacity of parents in poor families to protect and nurture socially, psychologically, and cognitively healthy children while participating in W-2. Specifically, the study examined how mothers making the transition from welfare to work are coordinating the demands of their jobs with their responsibilities as parents.

One of the study's primary goals was to broaden public dialogue about welfare reform to include a focus on how the working poor are coping in their parenting roles.

Key Findings:

- 1) More than half the women surveyed were rated as depressed;
- 2) More than half the parents surveyed worried "some" or "a lot" that they would not be able to afford adequate housing;
- 3) Two-thirds of the mothers surveyed experienced relatively high levels of economic stress.

Target Group:

A total of 104 families (40% from Milwaukee) representing each of Wisconsin's five Catholic dioceses currently participating in W-2 were selected. Each family had at least one child between one and six years of age, and a family member in either the Community Service or the Transitional Placement tiers of the W-2 program, or enrolled in services for teen parents transitioning out of the AFDC program. All participants voluntarily self-selected for inclusion in the study. An incentive of up to \$50 was offered for completion of the survey. Seventy-six W-2 mothers statewide were interviewed.

Measurements:

Data were collected via surveys and administered by trained, compensated interviewers. Interviews were conducted during the first quarter of 1998.

Funding and Timeline:

This project was funded through a grant from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The final report was made available in November 1998 and can be obtained through the contacts listed above or at: www.wisconsinatholic.com

Organization:

Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities

P.O. Box 7851, 600 Williamson Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851
(608) 266-7826

The Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities (WCDD) is a federally funded agency whose mission is to plan and advocate for appropriate and adequate supports for people with developmental disabilities. The WCDD is dedicated to improving the independence, productivity and integration of people with developmental disabilities into the community.

Contact Person(s):

Caroline Hoffman

Project/Research Summary:

The challenges of being a low-income parent are compounded when the parent has a disability and is unable to increase the family's income. This report presents a picture of parents with disabilities who are struggling to meet their children's basic needs.

Under W-2, parents with disabilities who received SSI have been moved into the Caretaker Supplement Program. **Families in Poverty: Parents with Disabilities and Their Children** presents survey results collected from 2,242 parents, interviews with 342 parents and letters and comments from more than 300 parents.

Key Findings:

- 1) Families in the Caretaker Supplement Program expressed a great disparity between income and expenses, and many said they are unable to pay basic living expenses;
- 2) The drop in income which occurred with W-2's implementation has placed many families at risk for losing their housing and being unable to provide basic necessities for their children;
- 3) 60% of the parents reported they could not afford to buy enough food for their families on their current income;
- 4) 80% of those interviewed said they would like to work.

The report concludes that there is a need for broadening public concern about families headed by parents who receive SSI due to severe disabilities, and the state needs to ensure that families who receive the Caretaker Supplement are living above the Federal Poverty Level.

Target Group:

5,900 Wisconsin families (including over 11,000 children) that are headed by a parent who has a disability, who formerly received AFDC for their children, and now receive payments as part of the Caretaker Supplement Program.

Measurements:

Surveys collected from 2,242 Wisconsin parents who receive the Caretaker Supplement. Interviews of 374 families were conducted by volunteers coordinated by WCDD. Additional letters and comments were received from more than 300 parents.

Funding and Timeline:

The project was funded through the Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities and was made available in November 1998. Copies are available by contacting Caroline Hoffman at above number or email at: hoffmcp@dhfs.state.wi.us

Organization:

Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative

University of Wisconsin-Parkside
P.O. Box 2000
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53141
(414) 595-2147

Established in 1994, the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI) is a statewide network of academics, members of the poverty community, and others in 10 Wisconsin communities striving to educate the general public about poverty-related issues.

Contact Person(s):

Anne Statham, Project Coordinator
Laura Whitmann, Research Coordinator
Sheri Nero, Sociology, UW-Stout
Mary Kay Schleiter, Sociology, UW-Parkside
Julie Elliot and Kathe Johnson, Rock County
Jean Verber and Teresa Ragland, Milwaukee
Robert Magill, Social Work, UW-Milwaukee
Katherine Rhoades, Women's Studies, UW-Eau Claire
Cindy Klevgard, UW-Eau Claire
Sandra Krajewski, Women's Studies, UW-La Crosse
Michelle Graf, Women's Studies, UW-La Crosse
Ruth Kalms, Social Work, UW-River Falls
Victoria Hansen, UW-River Falls
Nancy Bayne, Psychology, UW-Stevens Point
Ethel Quisler, Stevens Point
Jo Anne Schneider, UW-Parkside

Project/Research Summary:

Previous reports by the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative have focused on the primary barriers that prevent women from achieving economic self-sufficiency and self-improvement. Through surveys of more than 740 women statewide, these reports have documented the childcare, employment and educational barriers facing former welfare recipients and low-wage workers throughout Wisconsin. WPPEI's most recent project, a two-year longitudinal study, makes special efforts to document the impact that Wisconsin's welfare reforms have had on low-wage workers and current and former welfare recipients' chances to escape poverty. The project aims to generally understand the process people go through as they attempt to move out of poverty and to assess the significant barriers and/or assets which contribute to this process. The project will ascertain whether the low-income women surveyed are able to obtain needed services from the W-2 program. WPPEI also has various projects being conducted by members of its statewide network. Contact individuals listed above for additional projects underway and published reports.

Target Group:

The study's survey population, obtained through strategic sampling, consists of 200 women from nine Wisconsin communities (Beloit, Janesville, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Madison, Menomonie, Milwaukee, River Falls and Stevens Point). The sample aimed to include respondents who represent the diversity of issues faced by Wisconsin's welfare and low-wage worker populations.

Measurements:

Initial interviews were conducted in October 1997 and the project is currently in its fourth and final cycle of interviews. The interview guide in use was designed in collaboration with members of the poverty community statewide. The survey focuses on: changes in poverty status, perceived barriers and assists to leaving poverty, employment, training, and educational experiences. The interview guide (which has incorporated new questions with each cycle of interviewing) also covers: conflicts between work and family obligations, childcare access, domestic violence, and quality and availability of transportation. A holistic view of background experiences and implications for policy needs will also be provided.

Funding and Timeline:

The project is partially funded and currently supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Center for Community Change. The project began in October 1997 and participants will be re-interviewed every six months until the summer of 1999. Reports on findings have been released on an interim, preliminary basis with a final report to be released in the fall of 1999.

Organization:

Women's Studies Research Center
University of Wisconsin – Madison
107 Ingraham Hall
1155 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 263-2053

The Women's Studies Research Center of the UW Madison fosters research related to women and by women in all academic disciplines; it disseminates research results through seminars, reprints, working papers and a newsletter. It encourages re-examination of these fields of study by considering how gender has and does influence them. All its faculty is affiliated with the Women's Studies Program and other disciplinary units and its appointed honorary fellows receive access to university facilities and a community of interests.

Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative
University of Wisconsin-Paradise
P.O. Box 2000
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53141
(414) 595-2147

Established in 1994, the Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative (WPPEI) is a statewide network of academics, members of the poverty community, and others in 10 Wisconsin communities striving to educate the general public about poverty-related issues.

Contact Person(s):

Diane Michalski Turner, Honorary Fellow, Women's Studies Research Center

Project/Research Summary:

Low-income Madison Families' Childcare: Needs and Preferences elicited parents' experiences, expectations, feelings and ideas about childcare. The study also explored how W-2 had affected these low-income families, their childcare preferences and experiences.

Key Findings:

- 1) Respondents do not trust potential childcare providers;
- 2) Parents' concern with their children's safety, development and psychological needs precedes considerations of childcare fees and specific kinds of childcare services, and;
- 3) Very few respondents had accurate understanding of the W-2 childcare program.

Target Group:

Low-income families at two Madison food pantries and the JOBS Center (Dane County W-2 location).

Measurements:

Open-ended survey questionnaires requested information on basic demographic information, childcare preferences, experiences with childcare, current childcare provider, and respondents' knowledge of county childcare policies and subsidies. Ms. Turner interviewed 141 participants either at the food pantry or W-2 agency location.

Funding and Timeline:

This project was self-funded. A summary of research findings is available by contacting Ms. Turner at the Women's Studies Research Center.