Welfare Programming in the United States: Past and Present

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Presentation Objectives

- Provide a broad perspective on the meanings and vehicles of welfare
- Consider historical contexts
- Describe current formulation of a block grant for welfare

What Constitutes Welfare?

- Social insurance
- Public (social) assistance
- Subsidized goods or services
- Tax system
- Occupational welfare
- Family laws
- Personal social services

What Constitutes "Welfare": Public Programs

Welfare Evolution and Attitudes in the US

- 19th century: Poverty as a moral issue, worthy vs. unworthy poor
- First half of the 20th century: Progressives helping children by helping mothers
- Post-World War II: Civil rights/social work movement
- 1970s and 1980s: Emphasis on work strategies
- 1990s: Welfare as cause of family breakdown

PRWORA

- The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  - Purposes
    - Assisting needy families so children can remain in their own homes
    - Reducing dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
    - Preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies
    - Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families
## Basic Structural Features of TANF

- Block grant to states
- Federal oversight
  - Administration for Children and Families (ACF)
  - Office of Family Assistance (OFA)
- Provides cash assistance or non-cash benefits
- Federal allocation $16.8 billion annually

## Federal Guidelines for TANF Eligibility

- Low-income families
- Legal aliens after five years (with legal status)
- Illegal immigrants are NOT eligible
- Lifetime cap on participation: 60 months
- All parents must participate in work activity after two years (maximum) of receiving benefits
- Teen mothers must live at home (or with a designated adult) to participate and must attend school or job training

## Other Program Elements

- Diversion activities
- Family caps (19 states)
- Sanctions

## Other Program Elements

- De-linking from Medicaid
- Transitional Medicaid
- Child support enforcement
- Bonus to states for reducing illegitimacy
- SSI for children; more restrictive eligibility
- Abstinence (only) education

## Federal TANF Expenditures for Major Categories

- Some Numbers ...
  - 3.9 million recipients, FFY 2008
  - 4.3 million recipients, preliminary data FFY 2010

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families.
In Summary ...

- A number of lenses can be used to consider the concepts and implementation of "welfare"

- The U.S. has tended towards a stratified system, whereby "rules" and expectations are applied differentially

- For low-income families today, Congress provides a block grant to states to provide:
  - Cash assistance to the most needy for a limited time
  - Services, incentives, and supports to promote self-sufficiency

Lecture Evaluation

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