

Title: What Policies and Resources Are Necessary to "End Welfare as We Know It" and Meet the Human Capital Development Needs of Those Who Have Been Dependent on Welfare?

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Complete text:

A. What should the goals of adult literacy and basic skills programs for welfare recipients be?

1. What do welfare recipients need to know and be able to do to qualify for and find private sector jobs that will enable them to support their families?
2. What would the transition to this goal look like for a typical welfare recipient? Press/Doubleday.
 - a. What combination of services and resources is necessary to support this transition?
 - b. What should the sequence of services be?
 - c. Who needs to be involved in developing, communicating, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this transition?
3. The concept of an "adult mobility continuum" provides a useful way for us to think about changing adult needs for education and training over a life time. Meeting those needs at any given point in an adult's life enables him or her to enhance mobility, moving on to a new job or a better job in response to changes in the economy, the community or their own situation.

How does this concept help us think about a system for meeting the employability needs of adult welfare recipients? How would you place and define various groups within the welfare population on this continuum? How would you define optimal services at differing points on the continuum? education and training needs?

B. What performance standards should be developed for the literacy and basic skills components of welfare-to-work programs?

1. How should we measure customer progress and success in the education components of welfare-to-work programs?
 - a. What skills, knowledge, and abilities are important to develop and measure?
 - b. What stakeholders should be involved in setting these standards?
2. What assessment approaches are available to measure progress in these areas for adults at every level of literacy development, and for ESOL as well as native English speakers?

C. What do we know about successful strategies for welfare-to-work programs?

1. Recent evaluations of welfare reform programs suggest several factors that are associated with retention, achievement of skills gains, and attainment of credentials. These are:
 - a. The need to set clear goals. Data from the MDRC evaluation of GAIN reveal that the most successful programs were those that were clearest about their program goals and that oriented all program elements toward achieving those goals.
 - b. The need for interagency collaboration and coordination of services at the local and state level. "Counties that have established strong collaboration among social service, education, and job training agencies in the planning and implementation of GAIN have been successful in establishing specific program standards and outcomes focused on the needs of the GAIN participant and in identifying basic skills needs in relation to specific employment goals." (Rickard)

c. The need to develop service strategies that are specifically customized to address the special needs and circumstances of welfare recipients. "GAIN counties where adults showed gains in skills or attained credentials included close attendance monitoring and quick follow-up to resolve attendance problems, counseling to "buffer" welfare recipients' transition to school and to support them while they are in school, and special accommodations for slower learners and those at lowest literacy levels.... [In addition, GAIN data show that] programs must recognize and respond to the ultimate issue facing this population -- the need for employment and self-sufficiency. Welfare recipients are likely to become more engaged in education programs and find the programs more valuable if the services are directly related to their goals...In addition, more attention needs to be paid to efforts to link education to subsequent employment." (Martinson)

d. The value of integrating adult basic skills education with job specific training, rather than following the typical pattern of separate and sequenced components. According to the Mathematica evaluation of the Minority Female Single Parent demonstration, students at the Center for Employment Training (CET) showed significant increases in average monthly earnings, average hourly earnings, and the percentage employed in year 3 of the 30-month follow-up. The CET model provides open-access, integrated training based on competencies required by employers for particular jobs in occupations in high demand.

Taking these factors into consideration, what innovations in service delivery do you know of that might support welfare recipients in their transition to self-sufficiency? Where are they being implemented?

2. What do we know about the impact of learning disabilities that can help us structure programs more effectively to meet the needs of adults with LD?

3. What recommendations should we make about program quality for welfare-to-work programs?

a. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of the welfare population, what variables do we need to take into account in defining program quality?

b. Do we know enough about what works to endorse a particular approach to service delivery?

4. What kind of staff development will assure that welfare caseworkers, education providers, job developers and other key staff involved in the welfare-to-work transition are best prepared to facilitate the successful transition of welfare recipients to work?

D. Targeting and Resources

1. Given limited state and federal budgets how do we make best use of the resources available for education and training?
 - a. what strategies exist for effectively targeting existing adult literacy and basic skills resources from all sources?
 - b. Does it make sense to target a specific group or groups for service? Who are the likely candidates? What are the pluses and minuses of this strategy?
 - c. What are the trade-offs between serving a large number of participants in less intensive services and serving a smaller number in higher-cost, intensive programs that are likely to increase participants' earning potential?
 - d. What new approaches to service delivery might enable us to expand program capacity without large infusions of funding? For instance, how can we use technology to expand the traditional classroom to include the neighborhood and the community? How might we deliver functional competency-based learning into homes, enabling us to overcome costs and constraints like child care and transportation?
2. What resources and partnerships will enable us to address other needs that relate to whether welfare recipients can participate in basic skills instruction? For instance, how can we meet the need for low-cost quality child care?
3. What other resources are available for meeting education and training needs?
 - a. What kind of partnerships with employers can assure that learning and skills development continue once people find employment?
 - b. What legislative and other strategies might provide incentives to the private sector to support job-specific education and training on the job?

E. What are the policy and legislative implications of these recommendations?

1. How do the recommendations affect proposals for welfare reform?
2. What impact do they have in preparing for reauthorization of the Adult Education Act?
3. Are there other legislative or administrative actions that might be affected by these proposals?

REFERENCES

- A. National Education Goals Panel/Institute for Literacy Commissioned Papers Karin Martinson, "Emerging Evidence on the Literacy Performance of Welfare Recipients," February 1994.