

Profiles of Women Who Stay on Welfare More or Less Than Five Years

Background

Proposals to limit the length of time a family could receive welfare (Aid to Families With Dependent Children--AFDC) have been made at both the federal and state levels. Limits of two and five years are most common. Although a time limit was *not* adopted in Washington State in 1995, the legislature passed E2SHB 2798 during the 1994 legislative session. When it goes into effect, this legislation will reduce a family's monthly AFDC check by 10 percent after the *fourth* year.

Using **Family Income Study** data, we examined the characteristics of women who received AFDC before and during the Study period (1988-1992). The profiles are presented in a table on the reverse side. The table shows characteristics of those who received AFDC for *one year or less*, *five years or less*, and *five years or more*.

Family Income Study Findings

The profiles of women who received AFDC for *five years or more* and *less than five years* were generally similar. The greatest differences occurred in three areas, and were most pronounced between those who left AFDC in *one year or less* and *five years or more*. The areas of greatest difference were:

- **Education**--More of the women who stayed on welfare for *five years or more* had 11 years or less education.
- **Work**--More of the women who stayed on welfare for *five years or more* worked less than 500 hours per year, and earned lower hourly wages when they worked.
- **Abuse**--More of the women who stayed on welfare for *five years or more* reported being sexually abused as children and physically abused as adults.

Profiles of Women Who Received Welfare (AFDC) Before or During the Family Income Study

Characteristics	Less Than 1 Year	Less Than 5 Years	5 Years or More
Was Teen Mother	51%	52%	52%
Median Age	28 years	28 years	32 years
White	74%	76%	74%
Minority	26%	24%	26%
Median Age of Youngest Child	4 years	3 years	6 years
Median Years of Education	11 years	11 years	11 years
8 Years or Less Education	7%	9%	7%
11 Years or Less Education	38%	48%	46%
12 Years or More Education	53%	48%	48%
In School or Training	20%	28%	27%
Ever Worked in Year	67%	46%	32%
Worked 500 or More Hours in Year	50%	27%	13%
Median Months Worked if Worked	8 months	6 months	5 months
1988 Wage Rate in 1994 Dollars	\$6.02	\$5.52	\$5.38
Self-reported Disability	13%	13%	16%
Financial Help From Relatives	28%	26%	23%
Drunk Once a Month or More	10%	12%	9%
Median Depression Scale Score	20	20	21
Median Self-esteem Scale Score	48	47	47
Sexually Abused as a Child	24%	38%	37%
Sexually Abused as an Adult	28%	29%	33%
Physically Abused as an Adult	44%	55%	56%