

CENTER FOR FAMILY POLICY AND PRACTICE

23 N. Pinckney St., Suite 210, Madison, Wisconsin 53703

TEL 608.257.3148 FAX 608.257.4686

www.cffpp.org

POLICY BRIEFING

November 2005 _ Vol. 7, No. 8

Cuts to Welfare Programs and Increased Work Requirements Approved by House

On November 17, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a budget reconciliation bill, H.R. 4241 that incorporates President Bush's TANF reauthorization proposal in its entirety. The president's TANF proposal has been repeatedly unsuccessful over the last four years as a stand-alone bill in Congress. As a part of the budget reconciliation bill, however, it was the subject of little debate and was overshadowed by the deep cuts made to other social programs including food stamps, Medicaid and child support enforcement (see CFFPP October 2005 Policy Briefing at www.cffpp.org for a summary of the proposed cuts to child support enforcement).

The House budget reconciliation bill would make the following changes to the TANF program (these provisions are identical to earlier House TANF reauthorization provisions):

- Require "universal engagement" (a requirement that all non-exempt recipients begin work upon entry to the program).
- Require that 70% of a state's caseload work outside the home.
- Require that all adults with children under 6 years of age work 40 hours per week.
- Increase child care funding by \$1 billion, far short of the anticipated increase in need and virtually freezing child care funding over the next five years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that child care needs under welfare reform would cost \$11 billion over the time period.
- Require that states apply a full-family sanction to recipients who do not comply with program requirements. States are currently given the option to apply a sanction to just the adult in a TANF case, maintaining benefits for the children in the family.
- Allow work-eligible individuals to participate in "qualified activities" (limited education and training, substance abuse counseling or treatment, etc.) for up to 16 hours per week, and for only 3 months in any 24 consecutive months.
- Continue to bar legal immigrant parents from temporary assistance.
- Encourage states to pass through up to \$100 (or \$50 more than the amount of the current state pass-through; whichever is less) of child support payments to families receiving TANF, by eliminating the requirement for payment of the federal share up to these amounts.
- Amend the purpose of TANF to include the encouragement of "the formation and maintenance of healthy, 2-parent married families, and [to] encourage responsible fatherhood."

- Provide \$1.5 billion over 5 years for programs that promote marriage.
- Add to the list of state expenditures eligible for “maintenance of effort” credit, “spending on non-eligible [not just non-TANF, but non-eligible non-TANF] families” to prevent out-of-wedlock birth, marriage, and responsible fatherhood.
- Provide federal waivers to allow for state demonstration projects “to coordinate multiple public assistance, workforce development, and other programs.” The language allowing for the waivers is very broad, and it is therefore difficult to determine the possible effects this kind of proposal would have on people who need state social services. There is no limit on the number of states to which such a waiver might be granted.

The bill specifies a limited number of activities that can be funded through the “Healthy Marriage Promotion” competitive state grants program. Among them:

- Public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and needed skills
- High school education on the value of marriage, relationship skills and budgeting
- Marriage enhancement and skills programs for married couples
- Marriage mentoring programs that use married couples in at-risk communities

The Senate budget reconciliation bill will be taken up at some point after the Senate returns from recess in December. Whether or not the Senate bill will also contain the TANF reauthorization provisions will be determined at that point. There is some question of whether the TANF provisions are allowed in a budget reconciliation bill since they constitute policy changes and not budget allocations. The Byrd rule (originally offered by Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia) allows a Senator to offer an amendment or raise a point of order to strike or bar consideration of provisions deemed extraneous to budget reconciliation matters.

The budget reconciliation cuts to other programs have been analyzed by the Congressional Budget Office, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has published the following key points, based on that analysis:

- Increases in Medicaid co-payments would be applied to 17 million low-income Medicaid beneficiaries, resulting in delays in seeking medical care or forgoing medical care or medications, ultimately leading to increases in sickness and health-related problems for these individuals. Over ten years, out-of-pocket co-payments required of Medicaid beneficiaries and reductions in covered health care services will result in cuts of nearly \$30 billion.
- The proposed cuts to the Food Stamp Program are estimated to result in a loss of food stamp benefits to more than 220,000 people per month.
- Cuts to child support enforcement are estimated to reduce child support payments made by noncustodial parents by \$24 billion over ten years.
- The increased work requirement for TANF participants, combined with level funding for child care assistance will result in the elimination of child care subsidies for over 330,000 children by 2010.

CBPP points out that the \$50 billion in cuts made to programs in the budget bill could have been achieved in a number of other ways that would not have placed the burden on the poorest

families. These include curbing excessive payments to managed care plans and lowering the prices paid by Medicaid for prescriptions, and canceling two new tax cuts aimed at households with incomes of more than \$1 million per year.

The CBPP report is available at www.cbpp.org.

Demonstration Yields Lessons For Father Involvement in Programs

A recent issue brief based on an evaluation of twenty-one Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration projects funded by the federal Administration on Children, Youth and Families and the Office of Child Support Enforcement describes lessons learned in the implementation of the projects. The projects were funded for three years beginning in February 2001 to create and implement innovative practices that would increase father involvement in Head Start and in the lives of their children. Among the “lessons learned” in the evaluation:

- Participants felt more comfortable with male fatherhood staff. Male staff were able to counter the impression that the Head Start program was for women and children, and allowed for more trust. Retention of male staff was problematic, however, with more than half of the programs losing their lead father involvement position during the demonstration period.
- Staff training was cited as the most important element in a successful father involvement program. Programs reported that for female staff, the training allowed an opportunity to dispel negative attitudes toward working with men that were based on the personal experiences of female staff.
- Recruitment and retention of fathers was a challenge for the following reasons:
 - ◊ Their work schedules
 - ◊ Mothers were sometimes reluctant to have the father of their children involved
 - ◊ A general perception that Head Start is for women and children
- The following strategies helped to overcome challenges in recruitment:
 - ◊ Inviting fathers to all activities of the Early Head Start program;
 - ◊ One-on-one contact and relationship-building with fathers who were present at the program building. Staff also encouraged mothers to bring fathers to the program, and
 - ◊ Increasing the presence of men in person or visually in materials.
- Fathers showed a preference for activities that included their children. Attendance at father-only activities declined over time and these activities, such as peer support and father-and-staff outings were less popular than home visits, group socializations with children and simple activities with their children.
- Program partnerships with the child support agency primarily involved disseminating information to staff and fathers on the child support system. Many of the partnerships experienced challenges because of the differences in agency missions and the fathers’ hostility toward child support agencies, as well as confidentiality issues that made it difficult to address individual cases.

- At the end of the demonstration period, nearly two-thirds of the programs planned to keep staff devoted to father involvement activities. About half of the programs sought separate additional funds for providing services to fathers, but most had been unsuccessful.
- By the end of the demonstration period, most program directors felt that their programs had experienced a significant shift to becoming more father-friendly.

The issue brief, *Creating Paths to Father Involvement: Lessons from Early Head Start*, August 2005, is available at www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/.

Marriage Surveys Provide Mixed Messages; Research Clearinghouse Returns Federal Grant

Two recent reports provide some information on attitudes toward marriage and government efforts to promote marriage. The first was conducted by the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), a nonprofit organization that advocates marriage, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice. Wade Horn, currently the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was formerly the President of NFI. Horn has played an important role in creating and advocating for President Bush's "Healthy Marriage Initiative".

NFI conducted interviews with 1,503 respondents over the age of 18 to determine attitudes toward marriage. The survey found that:

- In response to such statements as "Fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children," and "All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father," NFI found widespread agreement (97% and 89% respectively agreed or strongly agreed with the statements), which it interpreted as broad support for the concept of marriage.
- More than 56% strongly disagreed or disagreed that, "In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown.
- Thirty percent of divorced respondents cited domestic violence as a reason for the divorce. NFI analyzed the relationship between reasons for divorce and domestic violence, and found that among the reasons proposed to respondents, "too much conflict and arguing" very strongly predicted a citation of domestic violence. The author states in the report:

This finding suggests, but by itself does not prove, that a great deal of the violence that was cited as a reason for divorce grew out of a pre-divorce escalation of conflict that was not long-term. It is likely that, as the conflict increased, one or more incidences of violence, perhaps often fairly minor ones, pushed the marriage beyond the "point of no return" on the way to divorce.

- Just nine percent of ex-husbands, but 44% of ex-wives, gave domestic violence as one of the reasons for their divorce.

The report considered responses to such statements as "Divorced parents can be as effective as those living together" and "Couples with children ought to be married" as measures of pro- or anti-marriage sentiments.

The NFI survey did not attempt to assess attitudes toward government programs to promote marriage, but a recent survey of 1,130 adults conducted by the PBS Religion and Ethics Newsweekly did include this question and found that:

- 82% of Americans say the government should not be involved in programs that encourage marriage.

On a side note, the PBS survey also asked respondents about their concerns in general, and found that 18% felt that “moral values” was the concern that worried them most, roughly the same proportion as was the case in polls conducted after the 2004 election. In this survey, however, when respondents were asked what was meant by “moral values”, the largest number (36%) named personal values such as honesty and responsibility. Just 10% felt that “moral values” referred to social issues such as abortion or gay marriage.

The NFI report, *With This Ring*, is available at: www.fatherhood.org.

The PBS report is available at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week908/analysis.html>

In a development related to the marriage promotion initiatives, the National Council on Family Relations has ended its contract with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). NCFR had been awarded a \$900,000 grant to establish a National Healthy Marriage Resource Center in September 2004, but its board refused to politicize its role and risk its tax-exempt status when required by the Bush administration to put a photo and statement from the President on the clearinghouse website, and to exclude same-sex marriage from the clearinghouse.