

Implications of the 1996 Welfare Legislation for Children: A Research Perspective

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Introduction

In this report we use results from evaluations of welfare-to-work programs and findings of basic research on children and families to anticipate the implications for children of the 1996 federal welfare legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA; P.L. 104-193). The new law replaces the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) entitlement program with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant to states. Much of the concern about the possible implications of the legislation has focused on adult recipients, especially whether adults will be able to make a transition to stable employment (McMurrer, Sawhill, & Lerman, 1997; Nightingale, 1997). Yet children comprise the majority of those receiving public assistance. In 1995, approximately two-thirds (9.3 of 13.6 million) of those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children each month were children (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, 1996). Further, provisions of the new legislation, particularly the work requirements, have clear implications for children's child care situations and experiences within the family.

Thus, there is also growing concern about how children may be affected by the new policy (see Blank & Blum, 1997; Collins, 1997; Collins & Aber, 1997; Kisker & Ross, 1997; Knitzer & Bernard, 1997; Lerner, Terman, & Behrman, 1997; Moffitt & Slade, 1997; Parcel & Menaghan, 1997).

The policy change is too recent for us to have a body of research results focusing specifically on PRWORA and children. Yet research findings from two other sources can aid us in anticipating the implications of the new legislation for children. First, some research in the past decade has extended the use of random assignment evaluation studies of welfare-to-work programs to consider effects on *both* adults and

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children. While the number of such studies is small, and much of the work is still in progress, this has been an important development, allowing for consideration of program impacts on children.

Second, the body of basic research on factors that help shape children's development, particularly research with an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), also provides findings pertinent to the present policy context. As we will note, basic research examines the implications for children of maternal employment, poverty, participation in differing child care settings, and fathers' involvement with their children—the very factors that the new policy seeks to address.

While we will consider the new welfare policy from a research perspective, we note two caveats: First, the evaluation studies that focus on children over the past decade have examined welfare-to-work programs that differ in important ways from those that are currently being put in place (for example, in terms of the populations targeted, whether participation in employment-related activities was mandatory, and the support services offered). These studies are thus not an appropriate basis for specific predictions about the implications of the new policy. Rather, they will be used to illuminate the processes by which children may be affected by welfare-to-work programs, thereby helping us to identify where our focus should be in assessing the effects of PRWORA on children.

Second, the issue of self-selection is an additional concern (Zaslow & Emig, 1997; Zaslow, Moore, Morrison & Coiro, 1995). The relationship, for example, of aspects of family life targeted by the policy (e.g., mothers' employment status) and measures of children's development may change, depending on the mother's circumstance. Mothers who *assign themselves* to employment, for instance, may differ from those who are *required* to work by a mandatory program. Basic research on maternal employment to date considers how children are affected when mothers are employed *of their own*

volition. While researchers increasingly take into account the initial characteristics of the mothers that make them more or less likely to become employed at their own volition (Vandell & Ramanan, 1992), they have yet to take into account the *context*—that is, whether or not maternal employment is the result of a policy mandate. Thus, although we are relying on existing research, one must be aware of its limitations.

In this report we first place PRWORA in historical context, noting especially how its provisions differ from those of the Family Support Act of 1988. We then turn to findings from two bodies of research that can help in anticipating the implications of PRWORA for children: (1) the recent evaluation studies of welfare-to-work programs that include child-outcome measures and (2) basic research on children and families relevant to specific PRWORA provisions. The next section provides examples of studies currently in the field and others being launched that will, in time, provide vital new evidence on the effects of PRWORA on children. Finally, in the last section, we note that PRWORA must be considered in the context of further policies that affect children and families.

Placing PRWORA in Historical Context

The new welfare legislation reflects a continuing national debate over *who* should be eligible for public support and *for what purposes*. Legislation has evolved over time, emphasizing originally the needs of widows, then encompassing separated, divorced, and never-married single mothers. The most recent legislation clearly reflects a national concern that policies should not foster, and indeed should discourage, teenage and nonmarital childbearing. Thus, views on the purpose of public assistance have changed dramatically over time. The earliest national welfare legislation had, as its aim, helping to ensure that indigent mothers could

remain at home to care for their children. The most recent legislation, in sharp contrast, requires that recipients work.

Key Turning Points in National Welfare Legislation

We present here a chronology of the key turning points in welfare legislation, drawing heavily from two excellent historical analyses of welfare policy. Chase-Lansdale and Vinovskis (1995) examine the evolution of welfare legislation up to the Family Support Act of 1988. Blank and Blum (1997) discuss changing themes in welfare policy up through passage of PRWORA in 1996.

- Prior to 1935, assistance for poor families was provided by private charities and by governments at the state and local levels. However, the widespread unemployment of the Great Depression exceeded the capacity of local efforts.
- The first national welfare legislation was passed as part of the Social Security Act of 1935. Under this legislation, women who were widows of men covered under the insurance provisions of the law received a percentage of their husbands' benefits, and assistance was provided through Aid to Dependent Children to children in poor families in which the mother was widowed, separated, divorced, or never-married. The legislation reflected a prevailing view that it was extremely important for young children to be reared at home by their mothers.
- Despite the intent of the law to address the needs of all children of single mothers, there were instances in which states restricted its application to children living in a "suitable home." This interpretation was used especially to exclude African-American families and families with never-married mothers. The Kennedy administration eventually took steps against this kind of restriction.
- A 1962 amendment to the Social Security Act changed the name, Aid to Dependent Children to Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The federal role in providing assistance was increased.
- As part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, the AFDC program was expanded. The 1964 and 1965 passage of legislation regarding Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Medicare expanded the benefits available to poor families with children.
- Concern was increasingly expressed over growth in the AFDC caseload, which grew substantially between 1965 and 1970, and especially the number of unmarried mothers receiving benefits. This was coupled with awareness that a growing number of nonpoor mothers with children were employed. This concern was manifested in congressional attempts to limit benefit levels and eligibility.
- In 1967 the Work Incentive (WIN) Program was established. Provisions accompanying enactment of WIN sought to encourage employment of welfare mothers by permitting them to keep a percentage of earnings from work while receiving AFDC. In the 1970s WIN was strengthened to require participation by mothers whose children were age 6 or older. Participation rates, however, remained low.
- In the 1980s there was substantial experimentation at the state level with WIN programs. Some of these programs were comprehensive, including education, training, job search, employment experience, child care, and transportation components as well as transitional benefits. The research base on welfare expanded to include stud-

ies of welfare dynamics (e.g., Bane & Ellwood, 1986; Moore & Wertheimer, 1984), and evaluations of the effects of welfare-to-work programs on such economic outcomes as employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance. Results were presented in congressional testimony and later summarized by Gueron & Pauly (1991). The research on welfare dynamics showed that many families (about 50%) used public assistance for support during a crisis. However, a minority of families (about 25%) was found to stay on welfare for long periods. This group of families, which tended to be headed by young unmarried mothers, accounted for the majority of AFDC expenditures. Studies of welfare-to-work programs pointed to modest but positive economic impacts.

- In 1988 Congress passed the Family Support Act. This Act built on the WIN demonstrations and the new body of research. It put in place the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, a mandatory program for mothers of children 3 years of age and older (or younger at state option). While mandatory, it also provided a range of services, including those that had been provided in the more comprehensive WIN demonstrations (education, training, job search and placement, child care, and transitional child care and Medicaid benefits). JOBS required the provision of basic education for those who had not completed high school or the equivalent, or who lacked basic skills. Teen parents were required to participate in such educational activities. Beyond the provision of education for these groups, JOBS gave substantial discretion to states in the use of job training, job search, work apprenticeship, and wage subsidy programs.

PRWORA within This Historical Context

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 shows both continuity with earlier legislation and major departures from it (see Table 1, p. 5, for a brief summary of PRWORA's major provisions and Table 2, p. 6, for a list of websites with more details). In a number of instances, the new legislation reflects earlier concerns, but addresses them in new and often more intensive ways.

For example, we have noted that the WIN Program and the Family Support Act both reflected growing recognition of the increasing number of nonpoor mothers who were employed. However, rather than requiring participation in a range of self-sufficiency activities, as WIN and the Family Support Act did, the new legislation requires employment and sanctions recipients who do not work. In particular, the new law requires that recipients of public assistance be working within 24 months after commencing receipt of assistance. States have the option to require that work or work activities begin immediately upon receipt of assistance. No family is exempt unless the state chooses to exempt the family. States are free to terminate all cash assistance for noncompliance. States must meet work participation rates (e.g., that 50% of one-adult and 90% of two-parent caseloads be engaged in work or work activities by 2002), but these rates can be reduced if caseloads are reduced.

Education and training activities that were permissible under the Family Support Act count only to a limited extent or do not count in fulfilling PRWORA's requirements. Note that single recipients under age 18 are required to attend school if they have not received a high school diploma. Teen parents or recipients under age 20 who attend school are counted toward a state's work participation rate. However, no more than 20% of the caseload counting toward the rate can be participating in school or vocational education. PRWORA requires work activities for parents with infants and toddlers,

Table 1**The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996: Major Provisions**

Provisions	Details of the Legislation
Eliminate individual/family entitlement to assistance. Create block grant funding for state programs.	States receive the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF); the dollar amount is based on their previous expenditures on AFDC, EA, and JOBS.
Establish time limits on welfare receipt.	TANF dollars can't be used to provide assistance after 60 months. State funds can be used to provide assistance after 60 months. 20% of the state's cases can be exempted from the time limit.
Establish work requirements.	Adult recipients are required to work after receiving assistance for 24 months (or less, at state option). By 2002, 50% of families receiving assistance must be working. Failure to meet work requirements can result in sanctions. States can't reduce benefits for parents whose failure to work is based on lack of child care.
Strengthen paternity establishment requirements. Strengthen child support enforcement programs.	Family grants can be reduced for failure to establish paternity. States must establish paternity for 90% of nonmarital births. Ease of voluntary paternity establishment is increased. States can require the parents of a noncustodial minor parent to pay child support if custodial parent is receiving TANF Interstate enforcement procedures are strengthened. States are allowed to seize other forms of income (e.g., lottery winnings) to meet support orders. State and National Directories of New Hires are created to help quickly track down seasonal and transitional workers with support orders. States must have procedures to withhold, suspend, or restrict licenses for those owing child support.
Provide monetary incentives to states to reduce nonmarital births. Require teen parents to attend school. Require teen parents to live with parents or other adults.	States which reduce nonmarital births without increasing the abortion rate will receive monetary bonuses. States may institute family caps, i.e., deny benefits for additional children born, while parent receives assistance. Teen parents must attend school and live under adult supervision. \$50 million will be allocated to states to provide abstinence education.
Change eligibility guidelines for Supplemental Security Income.	A new definition of disability separates qualifications of children and adults. New guidelines eliminate the Individual Functional Assessment and establish a new definition of disability as conditions which cause "marked and severe functional limitations"; guidelines remove the reference to "maladaptive behavior" in the criteria for determining disability. Children with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders are likely to be most affected by the new definition.
Change child care funding.	Four child care assistance programs for low-income families—AFDC Child Care Program, Transitional Child Care Program, At-Risk Child Care, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant—are combined into a single block grant: the Child Care and Development Fund. The level of federal child care funds a state can receive is capped; states can provide their own funding to maximize the level of federal funds available. States are no longer required to pay market rates for child care.
Change eligibility guidelines for legal noncitizen.	Legal noncitizens who are elderly, disabled, under 18 (if they were in the country in August, 1996), and certain Hmong and Highland Laotians, can receive Food Stamps. All other legal noncitizens are barred from receiving Food Stamps. States can decide whether to provide federal cash assistance to current legal non-citizens; newly arriving immigrants are barred from means-tested, federally funded public assistance.

Table 2**Internet Resources for Learning about PRWORA and Related Issues**

Site	Site Description	Internet Address
The Welfare Information Network	Clearinghouse for Information, Policy Analysis and Technical Assistance on Welfare Reform	http://www.welfareinfo.org
National Center for Children in Poverty/ Columbia School of Public Health	Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism	http://www.researchforum.org (Please note that a series of Issue Briefs on Children and Welfare Reform can be requested directly from the National Center for Children in Poverty.)
American Public Welfare Association	Welfare Reform Pages	http://www.apwa.org
National Governors' Association	Welfare Reform Information Pages	http://www.nga.org/CBP/Activities/WelfareReform.asp
Administration of Children and Families	Welfare Reform Resource Pages	http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare/wr/wr.htm
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation	Economic Support for Families	http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/isphome.htm
Urban Institute/Child Trends	Assessing the New Federalism	http://newfederalism.urban.org
University of Wisconsin	Institute for Research on Poverty	http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp
Northwestern University/University of Chicago	Joint Center for Poverty Research	http://www.spc.uchicago.edu/PovertyCenter
Child Trends	Current Research Projects	http://www.childtrends.org
National Research Council	Board on Children, Youth, and Families	http://www2.nas.edu/bocyf

though states may exempt parents of infants under 12 months of age. Under most circumstances, states may terminate assistance for failure to comply with work requirements. However, assistance to single parents of a child under age 6 may not be reduced or terminated if the mother proves she cannot comply because child care is unavailable.

The new legislation also continues to reflect concerns over growth in welfare roles and long-term welfare receipt. In a fundamental change from earlier legislation, under the new law, receipt of public assistance is no longer an entitlement, that is, a benefit that individuals are assured as long as they meet eligibility requirements. The new legislation dissolved the federal entitlement program (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Emergency Assistance (EA), and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, and created a single capped block grant for states (based on prior

state welfare spending) called "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" (TANF). PRWORA allows states flexibility in designing and implementing new programs within the parameters of the law. For example, while states had only limited options to change eligibility guidelines or reduce cash benefits under the previous legislation (except through the waiver process), PRWORA's flexibility allows states to reduce or even eliminate the cash component of their benefits package for specific groups. States are required, however, to spend state funds for low-income assistance at a level no lower than 80% (or 75% if the state meets TANF participation rates) of a historic spending level (i.e., "maintenance of effort"), based on 1994 spending for a set of federal programs.

The law explicitly addresses earlier concerns about long-term welfare receipt through the establishment of time limits. The time limit bars a state from using federal TANF funds to

provide assistance to a family that includes an adult who has received federal TANF assistance for at least 60 months. A state may allow exceptions for up to 20% of its cases. At the same time, states are free to enforce even stricter time limits on benefits or to provide extensions, with state funds, for families that reach the time limit. Some states, for example, will continue providing benefits for children but discontinue benefits for adults once time limits are reached.

The new legislation clearly reflects a concern, again one that has shaped earlier legislation, about the financial responsibility of non-custodial parents for their children. PRWORA places considerable importance, for example, on paternity establishment, mandating that states establish paternity for 90% of all births to unmarried women and that states expand the voluntary paternity acknowledgment process. In addition, provisions to secure child support have been strengthened. States are required to maintain and contribute to two central directories, the Federal Case Registry and the National Directory of New Hires, which will increase inter-state monitoring of delinquent noncustodial parents. States are also required to develop or strengthen existing enforcement techniques, including license revocation and wage garnishment, to increase child support collections.

Nonmarital and teen childbearing are also explicitly addressed in the new legislation. States must require, for example, that (with limited exceptions) single mothers under age 18 live with a parent or under adult supervision and that they remain in school to receive benefits. Up to five states will also receive monetary bonuses for reducing nonmarital births without simultaneously increasing the abortion rate.¹ In addition, at state option, benefits may be denied for additional children born while the family is receiving assistance; currently 20 states and Puerto Rico have opted to institute these "family caps" (National Governors' Association, 1997).

PRWORA represents a clear departure from the earlier emphasis on provision of opportunities for education as a means of enhancing

employability. The requirement that most TANF recipients work after 24 months of receiving cash assistance, combined with time limits on the receipt of cash assistance and rules about caseload participation levels, exerts strong pressure on current programs to encourage parents' rapid entry into jobs. Whereas the JOBS Program required states to include adult education and vocational training in their mix of mandated activities, TANF restricts education and training opportunities. While the new welfare-to-work grants provided under the Balanced Budget Act target individuals who lack a high school diploma and basic math and reading skills, basic education is not included in the activities supported (Greenberg & Savner, 1997).

The current legislation's focus on a rapid transition to employment rather than education or training suggests that there will be fewer opportunities to coordinate education and training services to parents with early childhood education services. Under the Family Support Act, some states and counties began to implement JOBS Programs in ways that combined adult education and vocational training with child development services. Denver's JOBS Program, for example, established services in community agencies that offered family support and child development programs. Similarly, Kentucky facilitated the coordination of JOBS Programs with family-focused services (Smith, Blank, & Collins, 1992). In addition, programs like the Even Start Family Literacy Program and the Comprehensive Child Development Program, whose authorizing legislation was passed in the same year as the Family Support Act, in many cases coordinated their services with JOBS. The Comprehensive Child Development Program and Even Start are "two-generation" programs that combine supports to increase parents' employability with services designed to promote children's development (Smith, 1995). JOBS funding could support some of the adult educational and employment readiness services of these programs. Thus, the employment empha-

sis of the new legislation may affect not only activities of adults, but also reduce the coordination between programs for adults and children in families receiving public assistance.

It is important to note that Congress has considered and will likely continue to consider legislation that would modify some of the provisions of PRWORA. Thus, for example, recent legislation restores Food Stamp benefits to some legal noncitizens (primarily to those who are under 18, elderly, or disabled and who were in the country when PRWORA was passed in August, 1996). Such legislation assures us that the debate over who should receive public assistance, under what circumstances, and for what purposes, is ongoing.

Two Bodies of Research with Implications for PRWORA's Possible Effects on Children

We turn now to consideration of existing research findings and the guidance they provide in anticipating the possible effects of PRWORA on children. We will discuss findings from two research traditions: (1) evaluation research on welfare-to-work programs with components focusing on children and (2) basic research on children and families with relevance to specific PRWORA provisions.

Evaluation Research on Welfare-to-Work Programs with a Focus on Children

Although there is an extensive body of research on the economic impacts of varying welfare-to-work programs (see, for example, Friedlander & Burtless, 1995; Gueron & Pauly, 1991), it is only in recent years that evaluations of welfare-to-work programs have explicitly focused on children. To date, three evaluations of differing welfare-to-work programs have examined program impacts on children as well as adults:

- (1) the Child Outcomes Study of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS), an evaluation of programs implemented under JOBS;
- (2) the New Chance Demonstration; and
- (3) the Teenage Parent Demonstration.

Because these studies serve as precedents to the new research focusing on PRWORA and children, we begin by summarizing features of their designs that have helped make them informative. We then report the findings that can assist us in formulating hypotheses for how PRWORA will affect children. As already noted, this earlier generation of welfare-to-work programs differed in important ways from programs being implemented under PRWORA. Accordingly, we focus on the broad conclusions regarding how such programs can affect families and children, more than on the specific results.

Designs of the three evaluations

The Child Outcomes Study of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies. The Child Outcomes Study is embedded within the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-work Strategies. It is following the development of a sample of children who were preschoolers when their mothers enrolled in the national evaluation of programs implemented under JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program). Whereas the larger evaluation is examining the economic impacts—for example, through assessments of employment, earnings, total family income, and receipt of welfare for a sample of about 50,000 families in seven research sites (see Freedman & Friedlander, 1995; Hamilton, Brock, Farrell, Friedlander, & Harknett, 1997), the Child Outcomes Study is focusing on approximately 3,000 children in three of the study sites: Atlanta, Georgia; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Riverside, California. Random assignment of the participants in the Child

Outcomes Study took place between 1991 and 1994. Data analyses of child impacts are currently in progress for the two-year follow-up; the five-year follow-up data are currently being collected, with data collection to be completed in 1999.

As we have noted, JOBS was implemented nationally in response to the last round of welfare legislation, the Family Support Act of 1988. This legislation required recipients of public assistance (who were not exempted), to participate in activities to enhance economic self-sufficiency. It also provided child care subsidies and Medicaid benefits during JOBS participation and for a year following a transition from welfare to employment. Program participation was mandatory, and nonparticipation could (and as Hamilton et al., 1997, have documented, for a proportion of families, did) result in sanctioning or a reduction in welfare benefits.

An important feature of the ongoing Child Outcomes Study is that mothers were randomly assigned—to one of two experimental groups or to a control group. This structure makes it possible to contrast the impacts on both adults and children of two program approaches: (1) a *labor force attachment* approach that stressed activities like job search to hasten a transition to employment and (2) a *human capital development* approach that stressed initial investments in basic education and job skills training prior to the transition to employment. Control-group members were eligible for all AFDC benefits, but were not required to participate in educational or employment activities through the JOBS programs. Accordingly, they did not develop an individual plan with a case manager to pursue activities appropriate to the human capital development or labor force attachment program approaches, nor did they meet with a case manager to monitor progress on such a tailored plan; and they were not sanctioned for nonparticipation in JOBS Program activities. Control-group members were, however, free to seek out similar activities in their communities at their own initiative.

Program impacts on children are assessed in three domains: behavioral development and emotional adjustment; cognitive development, academic progress, and achievement; and physical health and safety. Measures of the children's development are collected during in-home interviews 2 and 5 years after random assignment. During these interviews, children receive direct assessments of their cognitive development, mothers report on their children's development, and interviewers provide ratings of the home environment. At the time of the final follow-up, the children's teachers will also be surveyed about the children's school progress and adaptation.

In the Atlanta site, a further study, the Descriptive Study, was carried out to describe the family context and children's developmental status soon after the start of the evaluation (Moore, Zaslow, Coiro, Miller, & Magenheim, 1995). An additional observational study of mother-child interaction is also being carried out in Atlanta approximately 4-6 months and then again 4½ years after baseline with a subset of families from the human capital development and control groups (Zaslow, Dion, & Morrison, 1997; Zaslow, Dion, & Sargent, 1998).

The New Chance Demonstration. The New Chance Demonstration (see Quint, Fink, & Rowser, 1991; Quint, Polit, Bos, & Cave, 1994; Quint, Bos, & Polit, 1997) focused on an important and particularly disadvantaged segment of the welfare population: young mothers who had given birth as teenagers and who had already dropped out of school. New Chance was a comprehensive program that sought not only to assist these young mothers toward economic self-sufficiency, but also to limit their subsequent fertility and enhance their parenting behavior and life skills. In the evaluation, young mothers who volunteered to participate in New Chance in 16 demonstration sites across the country were randomly assigned to participate in a program group, with access to New Chance services, or to a control group, with access to services in their communities but not to New

Chance services. The random assignment of participants within this evaluation took place between 1989 and 1991. It is important to note that the evaluation did not contrast the program's services with an *absence* of services in the control group; rather, New Chance service impacts were compared to those obtained by control group mothers at their own initiative within their communities.

The comprehensive services of the New Chance Program proceeded in two phases. Phase 1 emphasized completion of the GED and also provided program components aimed at the personal development of the mothers, including life skills training, health education classes and services, family planning, individual counseling in the context of case management, and parenting education classes. Phase 2 focused on helping the mothers obtain jobs with the possibility of advancement. The young children of the mothers in the program group had access to child care for as long as the mothers participated actively in the program. Such care was offered at on-site child care centers in most sites. Mothers and children also had access to health care services. The program called for up to 18 months of participation in the New Chance Program, with follow-up by case managers available for a further year. The evaluation found that while experimental-group mothers had clearly participated in educational, employment-related, and other services (e.g., parenting classes, family planning classes) more than control-group mothers, participation by experimental-group mothers fell below expected levels. This reflected both absenteeism and early termination of program participation by some mothers. The average duration of program participation was 6.4 months.

The evaluation of the New Chance Program involved a sample of over 2,000 families, with follow-ups completed 18 months and 42 months after random assignment. Focal children in the child outcomes component of the study ranged in age from birth to 6½ years at baseline; 3½ years to 10 years at the final follow-up. The

final follow-up included maternal report measures of the children's health and social and behavioral development, as well as direct assessment of the children's cognitive development and a teacher questionnaire for those children already in a classroom setting (including early childhood programs). Results from both the interim and final follow-ups within this evaluation have been published (Quint, Bos, & Polit, 1997; Quint, Polit, Bos, & Cave, 1994). An observational study of mother-child interaction was carried out soon after the interim follow-up of the full evaluation in seven of the study sites with a subset of families who had a child aged 30 to 60 months. Results of the observational study have just been released (Zaslow & Eldred, 1998)].

The Teenage Parent Demonstration. The Teenage Parent Demonstration (see Kisker, Rangarajan, & Boller, 1998; Kisker & Silverberg, 1991; Maynard, 1993; Maynard, Nicholson, & Rangarajan, 1993) was carried out between 1987 and 1991 in two New Jersey sites (Camden and Newark) and in a section of Chicago. During this period, the demonstration sought to enroll all teenage mothers in the demonstration sites who were receiving AFDC for the first time and who had only one child. The sample for the evaluation of the Teenage Parent Demonstration was over 5,000 families; more intensive interviews and focus groups were conducted with selected subsamples.

As in the JOBS and New Chance Evaluations, mothers were randomly assigned within the evaluation of the Teenage Parent Demonstration. Those assigned to the control group had regular AFDC services. Those assigned to the program ("enhanced services") group were subject to mandatory participation requirements (30 hours per week in education, training, or employment-related activities) and received support services to enable them to meet the requirements. Mothers who failed to meet the participation requirements were warned and eventually faced reductions in their welfare grants (on average, \$160 per month) until they com-

plied. Mothers in the demonstration programs were assigned to case managers, who worked with them to develop individualized self-sufficiency plans and find appropriate activities; to arrange needed support services, including child care and transportation; and to help them deal with problems that arose. Mothers in the demonstration programs also participated in a series of workshops (with length of time varying by site) that focused on parenting and life skills.

The samples for the Teenage Parent Demonstration and the New Chance Demonstration differ in a number of important ways. First, the sample for the Teenage Parent Demonstration is about evenly split among mothers who were still in school at the time of program enrollment, mothers who had graduated from high school, and mothers who had dropped out of school (Granger & Cytron, 1997). This contrasts with the sample for the New Chance Demonstration, in which all of the mothers had dropped out of school. Further, whereas mothers volunteered for the New Chance Program, participation in the Teenage Parent Demonstration was mandatory. Finally, the Teenage Parent Demonstration sought to include *all* eligible mothers in the study sites, whereas the New Chance Demonstration enrolled mothers who volunteered for the program.

The report on the final follow-up of the Teenage Parent Demonstration (completed approximately 6½ years after baseline) has just been released (Kisker, Rangarajan, & Boller, 1998). This evaluation too had an embedded observational study of mother-child interaction (Aber, Brooks-Gunn, & Maynard, 1995). The observational study was carried out in the Newark site with families who had children aged 3 to 5.

Shared methodological features of the embedded child outcome studies. These three evaluation studies not only examine whether welfare-to-work programs affect children's development, but *how* children come to be affected by such programs. That is, each of these studies makes a distinction between *child impacts* (i.e., program effects on children's development and well-be-

ing), and the possible *mediators* of such impacts (i.e., the mechanisms or pathways by which child impacts come about).

This set of evaluation studies also reflects an awareness that impacts on children may vary for families with differing background characteristics. Each evaluation collected a range of information on the characteristics of the families at baseline, just prior to random assignment. These baseline data permit us to consider the impacts not just overall, but for subgroups as well. One can ask, for example, whether child outcomes differ when mothers have high versus low initial scores on a measure of literacy or more or fewer initial symptoms of depression. As we will note, findings at the subgroup level can have extremely important implications for policy.

In the section on new studies (p. 25), we note that evaluation studies are one fruitful approach in a range of complementary research approaches for studying PRWORA and children. Studies of PRWORA and children taking this approach should build upon the design features of this earlier set of evaluation studies, where possible, through

- assigning families to program and control groups randomly;
- documenting baseline characteristics, to allow for subgroup analysis;
- including measures of possible mediators of child impacts and examining not just whether child impacts occur, but how they come about;
- measuring multiple domains of child development, i.e., cognitive, socio-behavioral, and health.

We next consider broad findings from the evaluation studies and their implications in the present policy context. The findings on adults and families (the possible mediators of child impacts) and findings on children will be discussed separately.

Program impacts on adults and families

Economic impacts on families vary across the programs. This difference in findings appears to reflect a combination of program features and the populations targeted.

Economic self-sufficiency was explicitly targeted within each of the three welfare-to-work programs considered here, and thus program impacts on maternal educational attainment, employment, earnings, income, and welfare receipt are appropriately a primary focus in each evaluation. Impacts on these factors are of potential importance for children because previous research has linked measures of socioeconomic status (e.g., maternal education, family income) with child outcomes and because poverty (particularly poverty during childhood) is associated with less favorable outcomes for children (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Zill et al., 1995). A recent study by Moore and colleagues (Moore, Driscoll, Gleib, & Zaslow, 1998) suggests that when the economic status of welfare families improves, child outcomes also improve over time. The authors leave open the question, however, of how substantial the improvement in economic circumstances needs to be before child outcomes improve. A central question for future studies of welfare-to-work programs and welfare policies is whether changes in economic status need to be of a certain magnitude before they bring about changes in child outcomes.

A recent report on the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies, assessing impacts of JOBS programs two years after random assignment, provides clear evidence that the economic status of both experimental groups (labor attachment and human capital development) was affected by the programs in all three study sites in which the Child Outcomes Study is being conducted, i.e., Atlanta, Grand Rapids, and Riverside (Hamilton et al., 1997). The labor force attachment and human capital development groups are expected to experience differing "time lines" for economic impacts, with the

human capital development group taking longer to see changes in employment, earnings, and welfare receipt. At the two-year follow-up, both experimental groups showed increases in cumulative employment and earnings, although, as expected, the labor force attachment groups showed a stronger pattern. Welfare expenditures for both experimental groups were also significantly smaller, and fewer families had been on welfare continuously during the two years prior to assessment. In two of the study sites (Grand Rapids and Riverside), mothers in the human capital development group were more likely than those in the control group to have completed high school or obtained a GED since entering the program. Further, the impact on earnings and welfare receipt held for experimental group mothers whose children were preschoolers, as well as for those with school-age children, suggesting that having a preschooler did not impede program participation.

The Teenage Parent Demonstration provides some evidence that mandatory employment-oriented programs for welfare recipients can improve economic outcomes. Yet the findings suggest that for such impacts to be sustained for young single mothers, "longer-term activity requirements and support services may be necessary" (Kisker et al., 1998, p. 22). While the Teenage Parent Demonstration programs were operating, they increased mothers' participation in education, training, and employment, and they increased earnings and reduced welfare receipt (though they did not reduce poverty levels). These impacts faded, however, after the programs ended, and mothers returned to the regular welfare system. At the time of the final follow-up study, approximately 6½ years after random assignment, the control groups were largely comparable on measures of employment, earnings, degree attainment, and welfare receipt (Kisker et al., 1998).

The New Chance Program had effects on educational attainment, but not employment, earnings, or welfare receipt. In keeping with the program's emphasis on adult basic education, a

higher proportion of experimental-group mothers, compared with controls, had completed the GED. In addition, a higher proportion of experimental-group mothers had completed some college credit. Yet at the same time, a smaller proportion of experimental-group mothers had completed high school, and in addition, no program impact was found on an assessment of educational achievement (a test assessing vocabulary and comprehension of written material). At the time of the final follow-up, no group differences were found in the proportion of mothers employed full time or employed at all, or in hourly wages or earnings. The program did not affect the proportion of mothers leaving AFDC nor, in the last period of the evaluation, the proportions reporting ever having received AFDC. The only positive program impact was on the proportion of mothers who reported combining welfare and work during the follow-up period.

Each of the three evaluations completed to date documents that the increased participation of mothers in the experimental groups in educational, employment, or other program activities was associated with changes in young children's child care experiences. In the Descriptive Study of the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study, it was noted that significant increases in child care use occurred within only a few months of baseline. Use of both formal (e.g., center care) and informal care (e.g., babysitters) increased, but the increase in use of formal care was more marked (Moore et al., 1995). Similarly, the Teenage Parent Demonstration significantly increased child care use, particularly of center-based child care relative to other types of care (Kisker & Silverberg, 1991). In New Chance, center-based child care was available on-site in many of the research sites, and use of child care, especially center-based care, was found to increase. The increase was temporary, however, occurring especially during the first phase of program participation (Quint et al., 1994, 1997).

This set of studies also provides findings pertaining to the quality of child care. A special study of the quality of care in selected on-site child care

centers in New Chance, for example, found the care to fall just below a rating of "good" on a widely used observational measure of quality in center classrooms (Fink, 1995). New Chance findings also indicate that children in the experimental group tended to enter but then also exit child care during the initial period of program follow-up, in keeping with the pattern of mothers' program participation. That is, the program affected the continuity of children's child care experiences (see discussion in Quint et al., 1997). Maternal reports of group size and ratio in the Descriptive Study of the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study indicated that among families using formal child care, only about one third were in settings that met the recommendations for group size and ratio noted in the Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements (FIDCR [Moore et al., 1995]).² Below, we note that child care has been examined as a mediator of program impacts on children in the New Chance Evaluation.

In summary, findings to date on economic impacts differ in light of the combination of program features and population targeted. Impacts have been found particularly for programs that combine requirements and services, and evidence suggests that impacts are more difficult to bring about for the group of young mothers receiving welfare (see also Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism, 1998). Programs evaluated to date confirm that children's experiences of nonmaternal care are affected by maternal participation in educational and employment-related activities as part of welfare-to-work programs.

PRWORA is being implemented in programs that differ on key features across states (e.g., timing of work requirement, specifics of time limits and sanctions, earned income disregard). It will be important to ask whether economic impacts vary in light of these program variations and the populations they serve, as well as to examine how patterns of child care use vary within differing programs and contexts.

Program impacts on families can go beyond economic outcomes. The three programs consid-

ered here differed in their breadth of focus. While JOBS focused fairly narrowly on bringing about change in family economic self-sufficiency, New Chance was a comprehensive program that sought to bring about changes in multiple aspects of young mothers' lives; it also explicitly targeted the development of the young children of sample mothers (i.e., it was a two-generation program). The Teenage Parent Demonstration is more similar to JOBS. Its primary emphasis was on fostering economic progress in young mothers, though workshops at the beginning of the program focused on life skills and parenting behavior.

It is not surprising to find that a comprehensive program like New Chance had impacts beyond economic factors, though it is surprising that the direction of some of the noneconomic impacts went counter to predictions. In anticipating the potential effects of PRWORA on families and children, however, it is important to note that in the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study, some program impacts have been documented (particularly in parenting behavior) that go beyond economic outcomes. The magnitude of these findings should not be overstated. Impacts on parenting behavior were small, and also diminished over time. Nevertheless, these findings raise the possibility that even in programs that narrowly target economic outcomes (like PRWORA), impacts on other aspects of family life are possible.

In New Chance, a set of unexpected program impacts occurred in the domain of maternal psychological well-being. Even though symptoms of depression for both experimental- and control-group mothers declined over the months of the study, the final follow-up found that mothers in the experimental group had significantly higher scores on the measure of depression than mothers in the control group. Experimental-group mothers were also more likely to report feeling stressed all or much of the time in the past month, had higher mean scores on a measure of parenting stress, and reported being less satisfied with their standard of living.

The researchers of the New Chance Evaluation hypothesize that the program impacts on maternal psychological well-being and the lack of favorable program impacts on economic outcomes may be linked. That is, mothers in the experimental group may have experienced "dashed hopes": the program may have raised expectations for improved economic circumstances that in the end were not fulfilled (Quint et al., 1997).

In the observational study embedded within the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study, parenting behavior has been tracked over the first half year of program participation for a subsample of families from the larger study, at approximately 3 and then 5 months after random assignment. (This assessment will continue over time to examine longer-term program impacts on parenting behavior.) Findings to date indicate an initial adaptation to JOBS that involves relative disengagement from parenting: approximately 3 months after baseline, families in the experimental group³ had significantly lower scores on a measure of the emotional support and cognitive stimulation available to the young child in the home environment, lower scores on a measure of warmth in the mother-child relationship, and lower scores on a measure of joint mother-child activities. By five months after baseline, however, only a small difference on a measure of engagement in joint activities was documented (Zaslow, Dion, & Morrison, 1997; Zaslow, Dion, & Sargent, 1998). Differences in parenting 3 months after baseline coincided with the period during which the largest number of experimental group mothers were making the transition into participation in an educational or work activity.

The pattern of disengagement during this initial period of the program occurred among both those families who were making the transition to program participation and those families who never participated during the follow-up period. This suggests that two processes, not one, may be involved: adapting to new roles and responsibilities may bring about changes in

mothers' parenting behavior, but also parenting may be affected when families resist, or have difficulty fulfilling, program requirements.

The differences found in parenting behavior during the first months of JOBS were small and, for the most part, short-lived. It will be important to determine whether program effects on parenting occur in the context of new programs that involve more intensive work requirements, sanctions, and time limits, and also whether such impacts (if they do occur) are limited to an initial adaptation stage or are sustained during and beyond the program.

Interestingly, the embedded observational studies in the New Chance and Teenage Parent Demonstration have yielded contrasting findings on parenting behavior, suggesting again the importance of taking into account the specific features of welfare-to-work programs and the population targeted. In the New Chance Observational study, in contrast to the JOBS Observational Study, program impacts, though small to moderate, were in a favorable direction. About 21 months after random assignment, mothers in the New Chance experimental group reported greater warmth and emotional support toward children (Morrison, Zaslow, & Dion, 1998), were observed to use fewer harsh behaviors with their children (Weinfield, Egeland, & Ogawa, 1998), improved the quality of their book reading to their children (De Temple & Snow, 1998), and spent more time on parenting activities (Morrison et al., 1998). As we will note below, however, the favorable impacts on parenting appear to have been sustained over time only for specific subgroups (Quint et al., 1997). The New Chance findings of favorable program impacts on parenting are in accord with the emphasis the program placed on improving the young mothers' functioning in multiple domains, and the inclusion of a parenting education component during Phase 1 of its program. It is interesting and important to note that positive parenting impacts occurred in this sample of young welfare mothers, while in other domains, notably the economic area, it proved

difficult to bring about improvements.

Finally, no program impacts on parenting behavior were documented in the observational study embedded within the Teenage Parent Demonstration (Aber et al., 1995). In the full evaluation, however, at the time of the final follow-up, a small but statistically significant program impact on the stimulation and support available in the home environment was found in one of the three study sites. In the Newark site, mothers in the enhanced services group provided a slightly less stimulating home environment for their children. This finding is similar to that of the JOBS Observational Study but also suggests that impacts on parenting can occur a period of years after enrollment. Yet as with JOBS, the effect was small.

Previous research has underscored the importance of both maternal psychological well-being and parenting behavior to children's development. The studies described here that have focused specifically on children in welfare families (e.g., Coiro, 1997; Downey & Coyne, 1990; McGroder, 1997) suggest that evaluations of PRWORA will need to be alert to the possibility that impacts may extend beyond family economic self-sufficiency.

Program impacts on adults and families vary for families with different background characteristics. Results to date from studies of welfare-to-work programs indicate the importance of taking into account the heterogeneity of welfare families. Risk factors, as well as strengths and protective factors, vary within welfare samples, and these, in turn, relate to children's development (Moore et al., 1995). Moreover, both adult economic and noneconomic outcomes vary by family characteristics.

Regarding economic impacts, for example, Granger and colleagues have repeatedly stressed the critical differences even within the group of welfare mothers who are still in or just beyond adolescence (Granger 1994; Granger & Cytron, 1997). Teenage mothers who have already dropped out of school tend to differ from those still in school or who have graduated from high

school. A careful review of the economic impacts of three programs for teenage welfare mothers (New Chance, Teenage Parent Demonstration and Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program, LEAP) notes positive program impacts on employment and/or earnings *only* for the subgroups of young mothers who were enrolled in school or who had graduated (Granger & Cytron, 1997).

Another instance of subgroup differences comes from findings on parenting behavior in light of maternal depression in the New Chance Evaluation. The final follow-up found no positive program impacts on parenting behavior for the sample as a whole, a disappointing finding given results pointing to positive effects on parenting at the time of the interim follow-up. But when differences in initial levels of maternal depression were taken into account, mothers with lower levels of depressive symptomatology at baseline were found to be providing greater cognitive stimulation and emotional support in the home environment at the final follow-up. That is, positive impacts on parenting endured, but only for the subgroup that had less maternal depression at baseline.

From these findings, we anticipate that programs implemented under PRWORA will have different impacts on adult and family outcomes of importance to children, according to different family background characteristics.

Impacts on children and how they come about

Two evaluations report neutral to slightly negative results. Only two of the three evaluations, i.e., New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration, have thus far reported on assessments of children's well-being and development. For many of the child outcome measures program impacts did not emerge. However, where effects were found, they were unfavorable. It is important to stress that these impacts were small and limited to just a few measures. Findings from the two- and five-year follow-ups of the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study will provide an

important counterpoint to these results, particularly given JOBS's more favorable economic results.

Results of the final follow-up in the New Chance Evaluation (Quint et al., 1997) indicate that mothers in the experimental group rated their children's development less favorably than did mothers in the control group. They reported more behavior problems and less positive social behavior. Although mothers in the experimental group did not rate their children's overall health less favorably, a higher proportion of them, compared to control-group mothers, indicated that their children had had an injury, poisoning, or accident requiring medical attention. Experimental-group mothers of those children already in school or in an education-oriented preschool rated their children's academic progress less favorably than control mothers, and also indicated that they had been notified more often by the school of a behavior problem.

We note that these program impacts were all small. In addition, these unfavorable child impacts in New Chance came primarily from maternal report measures. Teacher ratings, in contrast, did not reveal a pattern, overall, of differing social behavior on measures of how children got along with students or teachers or on self-esteem, motivation, overall adjustment, or academic progress. Further, no overall difference between experimental and control children was found in direct assessments of the children's school readiness.

The overall conclusion of the Teenage Parent Demonstration is that the program had little effect on the children. Those impacts that did occur were quite small and tended to be limited to one of the three study sites—Newark. Children in the experimental (enhanced services) group in this site had slightly, though significantly, lower scores on assessments of reading and math and on one measure of expressiveness which assessed children's ability to communicate their feelings with others.

Again, we must await findings from the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study. It is possible

that favorable impacts will be found in the context of a program with stronger positive economic effects. But findings thus far are sobering. Evaluations of PRWORA will have to consider a range of impacts on children, from favorable to neutral to unfavorable.

Child impact findings differ for children from families with differing background characteristics. Just as adult outcomes have been found to differ by subgroup, child impacts have also been found to vary for key subgroups. This is well illustrated by findings from the New Chance Evaluation (Quint et al., 1997). The unfavorable impact on child behavior problems occurred only for specific, higher-risk families, that is, for those in which the mother was at high risk of depression at baseline and those with a greater number of risk factors at baseline. Families in which the mother had low or moderate risk of depression or a low or moderate total number of risk factors at baseline did not show the effect on reported behavioral problems. An unfavorable program impact on school readiness was also found for those children whose mothers were at higher risk of depression at baseline.

Analyses point to child care participation and maternal depression as explanatory factors. Thus far only the New Chance Evaluation has explored the bases of child impact findings. Evaluators of New Chance (Quint et al., 1997) note previous research suggesting that whereas child care of high quality and stability is associated with positive child outcomes, child care can also have negative implications for children's development. Although findings are not entirely consistent, some results point to negative sequelae for children in low-income families when child care is initiated in the first year of life at frequency greater than part-time, when the care is unstable, and when the mother-child relationship is weak. The New Chance Evaluation found significant increases in the use of child care for children under age 1 and greater instability of care in that children in the program entered into and also exited child care more than control

group children. The overall quality of parenting behavior was also implicated (Zaslow & Eldred, 1998).

Analyses indicated that length of time in child care and entry into a new child care arrangement during the initial follow-up period of the program helped explain the unfavorable program impact on child behavior problems, as assessed by maternal report. The researchers also investigated child care effects by level of mothers' initial risk for depression. Findings indicated that "day care use did not have an adverse effect on children's behavior among children whose mothers had low or moderate depression scores at baseline. Among mothers who were at high risk of depression, however, each month the child spent in a day care center added an additional point to the [Behavior Problems Index] score" (Quint et al., 1997, p. 279).

We are only beginning to understand how welfare-to-work programs come to affect children. Further analyses of the New Chance Evaluation are examining the relationship of child care participation to additional child outcomes (Bos & Granger, 1998) and observed mother-child interaction (Weinfield & Ogawa, personal communication, 1998). The report on the two-year follow-up of the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study will also include consideration of mediating variables.

Findings to date suggest the presence of multiple mediators of program impacts on children and, further, that their action may differ for different subgroups. In programs that have multiple effects on family variables of importance to children, perhaps in differing directions (e.g., there may be favorable impacts on earnings but unfavorable impacts on maternal psychological well-being or parenting behavior), it will be important to consider how mediating variables function together to contribute to child impacts. Effects on children may reflect the net of multiple, perhaps counterbalancing, influences of programs on the family.

Summary: Implications of evaluations of welfare-to-work programs with a focus on children

As we move toward understanding PRWORA's effects on children, we need to keep in mind findings from the earlier generation of welfare-to-work programs, especially that:

- Multiple aspects of family life can be affected.
- Child impacts will likely reflect the net of positive and negative influences on the family.
- Subgroups of children may be affected differentially.
- Specific features of programs (and how they fit with the population served) will be important.
- We should consider and examine the possibility of child impacts ranging from negative to neutral to positive.

Basic Research on Children and Families Relevant to Specific PRWORA Provisions

We turn now to a second body of research: basic research on children and families with relevance to specific PRWORA provisions (see Table 1 for a brief overview of provisions of the legislation and Table 2 for a list of websites that provide further details). The reader should keep in mind that the policy provisions we describe reflect current legislation at the national level and current state plans. Ongoing debate in Congress and state legislatures may lead to modifications of welfare policies and other policies for poor families. For example, the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-185) recently resulted in the restoration of Food Stamps for some legal immigrants, including those under 18 who were in the United States in 1996. In addition, an important feature of PRWORA is the flexibility it

gives states to experiment and redesign programs in response to changing economic, political, and demographic trends.

Employment requirements

As mentioned earlier, PRWORA departs from the Family Support Act and other welfare legislation by mandating participation in employment activities. If states are successful in meeting the employment participation requirements laid out in Title I of PRWORA, a substantial increase in formal employment among families receiving public assistance can be expected. For example, in 1994, only 8.9% of households receiving AFDC reported earned income (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, 1996). Among AFDC adult recipients, just 14% were enrolled in JOBS programs, JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act), or both in 1994 (Nightingale, 1997). It is estimated that as a result of PRWORA's work requirements, i.e., that 50% of the one-adult and 90% of the two-parent caseloads will be engaged in work activities by 2002, over 800,000 new workers will enter the labor force between 1997 and 2002 (McMurrer et al., 1997).

We note, however, that estimates from ethnographic or survey data of the number of women, under AFDC, who combined welfare benefits with employment, especially from temporary work or employment in the underground economy, or who cycled between welfare and work, have often been higher than figures derived from administrative data (Dennis, Braunstein, Spalter-Roth, & Hartmann, 1995; Edin & Lein, 1997; Hershey & Pavetti, 1997). Thus, the labor force attachment of public assistance recipients under previous welfare legislation has likely been underestimated. We also note that states can receive a caseload reduction credit whereby their work participation requirements are reduced in accord with reduced caseloads; thus, they may not in practice face a work participation rate of 50% as long as their caseloads stay below FY 95 levels (Mark Greenberg, personal communication, June 4, 1998).

As we anticipate the influence of work requirements on family processes and child development, it is important to reiterate that much of what is known about maternal employment and its effects on children is derived from research with mothers who voluntarily chose to work. The results of the NEWWS Child Outcomes Study and the Teenage Parent Demonstration Study will eventually permit us to explore the effects on children when employment occurs in the context of a mandatory program. Because low-income mothers who are employed voluntarily differ in important ways from low-income mothers who are not employed (employed mothers, for example, have higher educational attainment), we must be cautious when applying existing research findings to predictions about the effects of mandated work activities on children (Moore, Zaslow, & Driscoll, 1996; Zaslow & Emig, 1997). Indeed, even existing research does not provide a consistent answer to the question of how low-income children fare when their mothers are employed.

The small set of studies that considers maternal employment in low-income families generally points to neutral or modestly better developmental outcomes for children whose mothers are employed, even when family income and maternal education are taken into account (see Moore et al., 1996; Zaslow & Emig, 1997). One possible explanation for this pattern is that maternal employment is generally associated with *better* maternal mental health, a pattern that may be stronger among low-income women (Hoffman, in press). Maternal employment may also benefit children in low-income families through not only the income it contributes, but through the social and cognitive stimulation it provides the mother, which may in turn positively affect her interactions with her children (Parcel & Menaghan, 1990).

In contrast, though findings are somewhat mixed, there is some research suggesting that employment during the first year of a child's life has negative implications for children from low-

income families (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991). Researchers have also found that parents employed in low-wage jobs which are repetitive and unstimulating provide less nurturing and stimulating home environments and have children showing less favorable outcomes, than do parents in jobs which pay more or which offer greater complexity and autonomy (Menaghan & Parcel, 1995; Moore & Driscoll, 1997). To date, the effects of maternal employment on low-income children have not been fully disentangled from the preexisting demographic, social, or psychological factors associated with maternal employment. Nor do we have a full understanding of the implications for children of the employment conditions experienced by low-income working parents. Evidence thus far suggests that maternal employment which improves family income and enhances maternal psychological well-being will have neutral to positive implications for children's development, perhaps particularly when it occurs beyond the infancy period.

It will be important, as we consider the implications of mandated maternal employment, to take into account the conditions under which TANF recipients comply with PRWORA's work requirements. Given the results of the evaluation studies described above, it is reasonable to hypothesize that certain subgroups of welfare recipients—for example, those with work experience, higher educational attainment, and fewer depressive symptoms—will be more likely to find and maintain employment. We see some indications in the early descriptive data from the Child Outcomes Study that mothers who are *less* "job ready" at the start of the evaluation have children who are *already* showing less positive cognitive and behavioral development. In the Descriptive Study, mothers lacking a high school diploma or GED at the outset of participation in JOBS programs were less likely to have been employed prior to enrollment, to have been employed full time for a sustained period, and to believe that mothers of young children should be employed. The young children of these

mothers had lower scores on measures of receptive vocabulary and school readiness and were rated lower by their mothers on a measure of emotional and behavioral development (Moore et al., 1995). Thus, mothers who may be less equipped to meet PRWORA's work requirements may have children who are already at particularly high developmental risk. Combining these factors with economic sanctions for not meeting work requirements may place particularly disadvantaged children and families at risk for greater problems.

Even among those welfare recipients who are more "job ready" as a result of educational attainment or prior work experience, it is important to consider the available employment opportunities, the degree to which workers in low-wage jobs can move from entry-level jobs to more stable jobs with higher wages and benefits, and whether or not wages and benefit levels will be sufficient to move families above the poverty level (Burtless, 1997; McMurrer et al., 1997). Studies of former welfare recipients who made the transition to work (again, however, not in the context of a mandatory program) indicate that actual annual earnings were between \$9,000 and \$12,000 (with adjustments made for the low number of hours worked), which is between 70% and 95% of the poverty line (McMurrer et al., 1997). The degree to which recently employed welfare recipients supplement their earnings with child support, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or Food Stamps or reduce their earnings with expenses for child care, health care, and housing will also affect how low-wage parental employment influences children.

A number of states have developed strategies to foster employment and, in some cases, improve earnings among welfare recipients. Many states, for example, plan to subsidize employment by "cashing out" recipients' benefits and giving the funds to the employers who hire them. Some states also allow families to keep some public assistance while they are working until their income is above the poverty

level. It will be important to monitor the impact of such strategies on family processes and child development.

Time limits and sanctions

Unlike previous welfare legislation, PRWORA places a 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of federal TANF funds. We have noted that states will have some discretion in implementing the time limit and determining how many families it applies to. Based on the behavior of recipients under the previous welfare legislation, one study estimates that 40% of the current caseload, and 23% of new welfare recipients, will reach the 60-month limit within eight years of PRWORA implementation (Duncan, Harris, & Boisjoly, 1997). These percentages will be lower, however, if families respond to the new incentive structure and move more quickly off public assistance into employment.

In anticipating the possible implications of time-limited welfare receipt for children, it is important to examine what we know about children in families who are more and less likely to reach the time limit and lose benefits. The descriptive profile of families during the first months of the Child Outcomes Study is again helpful. In the Descriptive Study, long-term welfare recipients (receipt for five or more years) were more likely to show depressive symptoms and report feeling low levels of personal control and social support. Women who received welfare for more than two years were also different from short-term recipients: they had less work experience and were less likely to believe that mothers should be employed. Their home environments were rated as providing less cognitive and emotional stimulation, and their children scored lower on measures of receptive language abilities and social maturity (Moore et al., 1995). Again, it is reasonable to hypothesize that long-term welfare recipients are among the families least likely to meet PRWORA's work requirements and most likely to reach the time limit (although some early reports from states suggest otherwise [Pavetti, 1998]). The results suggest

that children from such families may already be at greater risk for poor developmental outcomes.

Perhaps even more salient for families than time-limited benefit receipt will be the sanctions states impose on those who do not comply with program requirements. To date sanctions have affected more families than have time limits (Pavetti, 1998). Evidence points to three primary reasons for sanctions: (1) administrative errors; (2) unreported employment, additional sources of income or support from extended family; or (3) barriers such as mental and emotional health problems, chemical dependency, and poor social skills which cause an inability or unwillingness to comply with program requirements (State of Minnesota Department of Human Services, 1998; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997a). The latter group of sanctioned recipients, considered "harder-to-serve" by caseworkers, are overrepresented among sanctioned families. Additionally, in a review of recent state-sponsored studies, a significant proportion of sanctioned families were found to have had prior contacts with state child welfare or child protective services (Levin-Epstein, 1998). Thus, while very little is currently known about state sanction policies and which families are affected, there is reason to be concerned about the children in sanctioned families, particularly those considered harder-to-serve .

Establishment of paternity and provision of child support

As with previous welfare legislation, a key purpose of PRWORA is to strengthen child support provisions. If successful, strategies to increase paternity establishment and secure child support payments from noncustodial parents (usually fathers) may increase not only families' economic resources, but also paternal involvement in children's lives. Indeed, findings from a number of studies have documented a positive association between the provision of formal child support and paternal contact with children (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1997).

Although a relatively small body of research

describes the variety of roles fathers play in the lives of their children and the implications of father involvement for development (Engle & Breaux, 1998; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998), any predictions of the potential impact of mandatory paternity acknowledgment and child support payments on children's development must be tentative. In general, nonresidential fathers (particularly those who have never married) have not been adequately represented in national surveys, so little information is available documenting their demographic characteristics or their ability to pay child support (Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1997; Sorenson, 1996). Research documenting an association between child support payment and paternal contact with children has been conducted primarily with middle-class families and has not sufficiently taken into account the psychological and demographic factors associated with paternal involvement among nonresidential fathers (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1997). Although paternal contact is generally expected to be linked with positive developmental outcomes, this association has not been strongly established and replicated across studies (Furstenberg, 1995) because it is difficult to determine whether relations between paternal involvement and child outcomes are a function of the factors that predict paternal involvement (e.g., paternal education and income) or of paternal involvement itself.

Despite the dearth of research examining how child support policies influence low-income nonresidential fathers and how, in turn, in the context of mandatory policies, paternal contact and/or involvement are associated with child outcomes, existing research does highlight areas which should be targeted in evaluations of PRWORA's child support provisions (e.g., Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Robins, 1994; Nord & Zill, 1996). First, it will be important to document whether family income increases as a result of child support provisions and whether this income, regardless of its links to paternal contact, is beneficial for children and families.

Second, it will be useful to document the degree to which policies encourage or discourage the provision of informal sources of support. Evidence from qualitative research indicates that, even when nonresidential fathers do not provide formal child support, the informal supports they provide (e.g., cash or other items such as groceries, diapers, or clothes given directly to the mother) can be important. There is, to date, however, limited study of the role such informal support plays in the quality of the home environment and its effect on children. Findings from the Descriptive Study of the Child Outcomes Study indicate that provision of informal support is only marginally related to cognitive stimulation in the home environment (Greene & Moore, 1996).

Third, researchers must examine the impact of child support policies on the *quality* of the nonresidential father's relationship with both the child and the custodial parent. One potential result of strong child support enforcement strategies is that the entry of "reluctant" fathers into children's lives will increase conflict between children's parents and thus be detrimental for children (Garfinkel et al., 1997). Indeed, there is some concern that child support enforcement strategies could be linked to domestic violence. As such, states are required to develop definitions and standards for "good cause" exceptions to the child support cooperation requirements in PRWORA (Roberts, 1997). In contrast, if contact between parents is relatively harmonious and the father is a supportive presence in his children's lives, children may indeed benefit from increased father involvement (Emig & Greene, 1997; Marsiglio & Day, 1997). Clearly, more research is needed that examines the role of paternal involvement and child support in the lives of young children, particularly those in never-married, low-income families.

States are experimenting with different strategies for increasing noncustodial parents' financial responsibility for their children. For example, the Non-Custodial Parent Services

Unit in Illinois provides services for court-referred noncustodial parents (Illinois Department of Public Aid, 1996). The services are primarily related to employment and job search issues, but referrals are also made to social service agencies which can more directly assess the personal and social needs of low-income, nonresidential fathers. Other states have launched educational campaigns describing the importance of paternity establishment for both children and parents.

Eligibility changes

PRWORA allows states (and in some cases, requires states) to withhold benefits from certain groups, including legal noncitizens, drug felons, and recipients who do not comply with program requirements. Although recent federal legislation reinstated Food Stamp benefits for some legal immigrants, many are still not eligible; states must also decide whether or not to provide TANF benefits to legal immigrants. Currently, only Alabama and Guam have decided *not* to provide TANF to this group (National Governors' Association, 1997). Tracking states' policies for legal noncitizens, particularly new entrants, will be important over time because they may remain a target for reduced or eliminated benefits. Because children of legal noncitizens may be another group already at greater risk for developmental problems (e.g., low academic achievement; Goldenberg, 1996), substantial decreases in economic resources may be particularly detrimental for these children. State "safety nets" and emergency benefits for children and families who lose eligibility for benefits will likely be critical to child well-being under PRWORA.

In addition, eligibility requirements for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits were changed under Title II of PRWORA. The law created a new definition of disability for children which is stricter than previous definitions. At least 135,000 and as many as 315,000 children with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders are expected to lose their eligibility for benefits under the new definition (Lo-

prest, 1997; Social Security Administration, 1997). Many parents of children previously receiving SSI are likely to seek TANF benefits; they may simultaneously face a loss of SSI benefits *and* new work requirements. In these families, the challenge of managing children with behavioral and developmental problems may be exacerbated by a decrease in family resources and changes in maternal availability and supervision. Depending on the availability of alternative sources of supervision, children in these families, who already require special services, may thus be at risk for possible negative impacts of PRWORA on key aspects of family life.

Provisions addressing nonmarital and teenage childbearing

As noted above, a number of PRWORA provisions explicitly focus on the issues of nonmarital and teenage childbearing. If these successfully discourage childbearing among unmarried women and teenagers, the children already in these families may benefit. There is a long-standing body of research documenting negative sequelae of early and nonmarital childbearing for mothers and their children, and indicating negative developmental outcomes for children living in families with large numbers of children or with closely spaced and unwanted births (Barber, Axinn, & Thornton, 1997; Blake, 1989; Brown & Eisenberg, 1995; Maynard, 1997). It will be critical to track whether policies such as the "family cap," which denies additional benefits for children born to mothers already in the program, bring about a reduction in subsequent childbearing. If such a reduction occurs, it may be associated with more positive outcomes for the children already born. However, if "family cap" policies do not discourage subsequent childbearing, then fixed economic resources will be shared among more family members, with possible negative implications for the children already born. Early evidence from Delaware's A Better Chance Program (ABC) indicates that, after 18 months, "family cap" policies and other welfare reform provisions (e.g., sanctions and

time limits) had no impact on numbers of births or current pregnancies (Fein, 1997). This finding parallels those of New Chance and other programs aimed at disadvantaged teenage mothers which did not significantly reduce subsequent pregnancies and births among teenage mothers (Quint et al., 1997). ABC did, however, show increases in marriage and marital cohabitation, but only among young (under age 25), short-term welfare recipients. Clearly, tracking policy effects on rates of marriage and fertility among welfare recipients will be important to understanding the implications of PRWORA for children.

Child care provisions

As families respond to PRWORA's work requirements and time-limited welfare receipt, the need for affordable, accessible child care, which supports the transition from welfare to work while providing safe and nurturing care for children, becomes an increasingly central concern for families and policymakers. Under the previous legislation, child care for an AFDC recipient or one making the transition out of AFDC was a noncapped entitlement: all eligible families could receive benefits, and states could access funds as needed. The new Child Care and Development Fund, under which funds for child care are provided to the states, is capped. States will receive an amount tied to their own expenditure, whichever is higher of FY 1994, 1995, or the average of 1992-94. States may also get further funding by transferring funds from their Social Services Block Grant or their TANF block grant, or by exceeding the amount of state funds spent to match federal funding in FY 1994 or 1995. Thus, the new legislation allows for increased child care funding (depending on the extent to which states invest in child care and draw down matching federal funding) and gives states flexibility to design child care assistance programs. There is a great deal of variation, however, in states' capacity and commitment to investments in child care, and how much states will maintain or increase child care spending under PRWORA is unclear (Long & Clark, 1997).

Subsidy levels and reimbursement rates are also likely to change under PRWORA (Raikes, 1998). States are no longer required to conduct market rate surveys (though it is encouraged in proposed regulations by the Department of Health and Human Services) or pay costs of care up to the 75th percentile of child care rates. Further, a recent report by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services (1998) expresses concern that a state's decision not to reimburse at the 75th percentile curtails parental choice of type of care and guides parents toward informal arrangements. This report also notes the lack of monitoring of safety (e.g., on-site inspections, checks on provider backgrounds for abuse/neglect records) in some states for informal settings as a prerequisite for reciprocal subsidy. If lower reimbursement rates lead to lower wages for child care staff, we could expect a decline in the quality of child care (Smith, 1998). States will need to make difficult choices regarding the target population of child care assistance and the extent to which low-income working families who are *not* receiving welfare will be served.

The package of child care provisions that states create for families receiving TANF and for low-income working families will play an important role in children's experiences under the new legislation. For example, as states attempt to curb costs and expand the supply of child care, they may encourage the use of informal child care (i.e., care in unregulated home settings, with relatives or nonrelatives), which is typically less expensive than regulated child care in centers or licensed family child care. Although informal child care is generally more flexible in its hours of operation than center-based care and evidence indicates that parents view such care as providing the flexibility they need to fulfill work obligations (Emlen, 1998), recent research indicates that many informal-care settings provide lower quality care (Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995). In addition, evidence indicates that, for children from families receiving welfare, participation in formal

early child care and education programs can be positively associated with school readiness (Zaslow, Oldham, Moore, & Magenheim, in press). Researchers must investigate the quality of child care that children receive when their parents are fulfilling PRWORA requirements, including the extent to which it supports children's development, health, and safety (Lombardi, 1998; Moorehouse, 1998).

Whether the current supply of child care keeps pace with increased demand owing to work requirements is also important. Families who do not find reliable child care may be forced to patch together a variety of informal or temporary arrangements for their children. There is a particular concern about the supply of care for infants and school-age children (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997b). Given research findings which show the association between child care, child development, parental employment, and welfare status, it will be critical for researchers to track and evaluate state responses to PRWORA's child care provisions.

Summary

Drawing from the research on children in the context of past welfare-to-work programs, we anticipate the possibility of both positive and negative effects of PRWORA on children, with family characteristics interacting with specific policy parameters to determine the direction of effects. In particular, children may well benefit from the new policy if mothers successfully make the transition to employment and increased economic resources, particularly if the employment circumstances are not excessively stressful and child care is stable and of good quality. Children may also benefit from greater paternal support, both economic and social, if paternity and child support policies succeed in bringing about greater and more positive father involvement. Also, if work requirement and family cap policies succeed in restricting family size, children already present should benefit.

On the other hand, previous research rais-

es the possibility that children in families in which the mother is less likely to make the transition to employment, in families that are more likely to come up against time limits, and in families that are ineligible under the new legislation already appear to be at greater risk for poor developmental outcomes. These children could experience negative outcomes as a result of PRWORA provisions.

Finally, some children may experience neither negative *nor* positive cumulative effects of PRWORA per se, in that various policy provisions may have small and/or offsetting influences. We need to keep in mind, however, that these children who do not benefit from PRWORA will likely remain at risk for the negative outcomes associated with long-term poverty, including poor health status, low academic achievement, and poor socioemotional adjustment (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

Examples of New Studies Focusing on PRWORA and Children

We have noted multiple instances in which it will be critical for future research to consider the implications of PRWORA provisions for children. We turn now to a description of new studies that will help to address these gaps. Rather than attempting to summarize the many new studies in progress, we instead describe examples of research being conducted with different methodological approaches. Such contrasting approaches provide different and complementary perspectives, each with distinctive strengths and limitations. The websites noted in Table 2 provide information on how to contact the research teams for further details. For ongoing updates of a more exhaustive list of studies focusing on welfare and children, see especially the on-line database of the Research Forum on Children, Families and the New Federalism (website noted in Table 2).

Evaluation Research

Evaluation studies, in the tradition of the experimental evaluations of past welfare-to-work programs, will be an important source of information about the impacts of specific programmatic approaches on children. Given our expectation that states will differ substantially in how they implement PRWORA, studies evaluating key programmatic variations will be critical.

- The *Project on State-Level Child Outcomes* is pursuing experimental studies in five states. This research builds on evaluations of adult outcomes in states that had been granted waivers under the previous welfare legislation. These waiver experiments are testing numerous features of state PRWORA implementation, such as family caps, time limits, and earned income disregards. The Department of Health and Human Services and several private foundations are funding the states to augment their evaluation studies with measures of both child outcomes and the mediating variables important to children's development (including family income, employment, maternal psychological well-being, home environment, and child care). Child Trends and the NICHD Family and Child Well-being Research Network are providing technical support to the states to proceed with these child outcomes studies (Moore, 1998).
- The *New Hope* project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is designed to supplement the earnings of program participants working 30 hours a week to bring their annual household incomes above the poverty line. Program participants also receive support services and job retention assistance. The random assignment design of the New Hope evaluation, conducted by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and other investigators (with the research team including Huston, Duncan, Weisner, and

Granger) will permit an examination of program impacts on a variety of outcomes, including child developmental outcomes (Weisner, 1998).

- The *Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project*, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and the Center for Young Children and Families at Columbia University, will include a sub-study of Early Head Start and early childhood development in the context of welfare reform. The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project is an intensive study of the new Early Head Start program and simultaneously begins a far-reaching longitudinal study of infants and toddlers in low-income families. This comprehensive, two-generation program includes intensified services that begin before the child is born and concentrate on enhancing the child's development and supporting the family during the critical first three years of the child's life. The Early Head Start study will include approximately 3,000 families living in 17 diverse communities that reflect the socio-economic and political context of low-income families in the United States in the late 1990s. The evaluation will measure a broad range of outcomes, collect extensive information about the programs and the individual families' experiences with them, and conduct analyses to link experiences with outcomes. The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project is another evaluation study that will provide valuable information about PRWORA. The evaluation will examine how Early Head Start programs mediate the effects of welfare reform on families and children, assessing what family and child impacts can be expected when families subject to welfare reform requirements receive intensive child development/child care services.

Survey Research

Surveys that sample national, state, or local populations will also be important in documenting the well-being of children in families in defined geographical regions (Brown, 1998). Given that certain families will no longer be eligible or will chance not to apply for benefits under PRWORA, surveys will provide a view of child well-being that would not be captured by evaluation studies involving only eligible families who have applied for benefits. Longitudinal surveys will permit the tracking of changes in child well-being over time, making it possible, for example, to examine whether increasing numbers of children are living in poor or working poor families.

- The *National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)* is an example of a survey that will provide both national and (for 13 selected states) state-level data critical to tracking effects of the new welfare policy. The NSAF is the survey component of the Assessing New Federalism Study being carried out by the Urban Institute and Child Trends. The survey was conducted in 1997 with a second wave planned for 1999 or 2000. The NSAF collects data on possible mediators of child outcomes, such as family structure, income, child support, maternal employment, program participation, child care, maternal psychological well-being, parental involvement in children's schooling, and family stability/turbulence. Areas of child well-being examined include health status, involvement in positive activities, and child behavior problems.
- The *Survey of Program Dynamics* conducted by the Census Bureau will collect survey data on child well-being and family processes. Although state-specific estimates will not be possible, longitudinal data will be collected, allowing researchers to examine the implications of policy changes over time.

Analyses of Administrative Data

Administrative data will provide essential information on caseloads, child care subsidies, benefit levels, and numbers of families reaching time limits or being sanctioned (Brown, 1998).

- The *Inventory of State Efforts* will focus heavily on administrative data. The study is being conducted by UC Data under the auspices of the Joint Center for Poverty Research at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. As part of the Poverty Center's mission to support research on the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing poverty, the Center sought funding from the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, to create an Advisory Panel to assess the development of research-ready data from state administrative sources in the areas of public assistance, public health, and welfare and for use in policy and academic research. This project will summarize the status of state administrative data capabilities relevant to welfare reform. An inventory is being completed with a sample of 28 states, stratified by size of population and geographical location. The inventory also gives particular attention to successful efforts to link administrative data from different data systems.
- The *Chapin Hall Center for Children* is providing technical assistance to states who are interested in improving their capacities to develop and use indicators of child well-being in state and local policy work. Up to 10 grants will be awarded to states by the Department of Health and Human Services to support state projects. Tracking the effects of welfare policies on the well-being of children is one important potential focus, and administrative data are expected to be major sources of information for at least some of the state projects.

In-Depth Assessments of Child Development, Ethnographic Research, and Observational Studies

In-depth studies involving ethnography, direct assessment of child development, and observations of parent-child interaction will help us understand and assess families' perceptions and experiences under the new policies. Ethnographic work, for example, allows investigation of changing family attitudes—for instance, toward the bureaucracy or benefit receipt (see, for example, Newman, 1998, and Edin, 1998, for examples of ethnographic work focusing on working poor and welfare families).

- The *Welfare Reform and Children: a Three City Study*, conducted by a team of researchers (including Angel, Burton, Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, Moffit, and Wilson) in San Antonio, Boston, and Chicago, combines comparative ethnographic research with a longitudinal survey to study how the new policies influence parents, children, and neighborhood resources over time (Cherlin, 1998). Extensive assessments of children's social, cognitive, and physical development will be conducted. In addition, the ethnographic component of the study will use life-history interviews, diary studies, participant observation, and field research in neighborhoods to assess changes in neighborhood resources, service provision, and family processes, and the implications of these changes for children. The study participants will include families receiving TANF benefits as well as working poor families.
- The study of *Fragile Families and Child Well-being*, led by a team of investigators (including McLanahan, Garfinkel, Brooks-Gunn, Tienda, Singer, and Deaton) and funded by the Ford Foundation and NICHD, is a longitudinal study which will follow three cohorts (two beginning at birth) of children

born to low-income, unmarried parents in U.S. communities. The purpose of the Fragile Families project is to better understand family dynamics and relationships between unmarried parents, the forces underlying family formation and dissolution, and how these processes affect child well-being. It will also examine how government policies for “fragile families” (e.g., cash assistance, child support, health care, and child care) influence family processes and child development.

- In *Devolution of Welfare: Assessing Children’s Changing Environments and Effects on School Readiness*, Fuller and Kagan will investigate the influence of welfare reform on community early education organizations, family processes, and children’s early learning. The study will examine longitudinally the supply of center-based child care programs and family child care homes in different communities, the choices families make about early education and care for their children, and how children fare in communities with different resources for early child care. Data will be collected in New Haven, Connecticut; Tampa, Florida; and San Francisco and Santa Clara, California.
- In the *National Study of Low Income Child Care*, Abt Associates and the National Center for children in Poverty at Columbia University, under a contract with the Administration for Children and Families, are conducting a 5-year national study on how the implementation of PRWORA influences parents’ employment and child care decisions as well as children’s experiences in child care. Data gathered from administrative records and key community informants will be used to examine state child care policies, practices, regulations, and resource allocations and how they affect the child care available to low-income families. In 5 of the 25 communities selected for the

study, a more intensive study of parental child care decisions and children’s experiences in child care will be conducted. Analyses in the subsample will be based on in-person interviews, observations of child care settings, and telephone survey data. The role of child care subsidies in parental choice of child care and the effects of child care on parental employment and family functioning will be addressed in the study.

- The *Project on Devolution and Urban Change*, conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, will incorporate analyses of administrative data, field research, and survey data to study how social welfare programs are restructured in the new policy context and to examine the effects of these changes on low-income families and children, neighborhoods, and institutions (Edin, 1998).

Conclusion: PRWORA in Conjunction with Other Evolving Policies

As research on the effects of the PRWORA continues, it will be important to consider the interplay of PRWORA with other new family-related policies. In particular, policies that affect access to child care and health care have the potential to affect child well-being. These policies may also influence children through their impact on family income (e.g., by affecting the cost to families of these essential supports). Similarly, other policies that affect the income of low-wage workers, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, SSI, child support, and the minimum wage, could make a critical difference for families moving from welfare to work.

Policy in three important domains—child care, health care, and income support—is changing and is subject to active debate (e.g., Bergmann, 1997). Evidence of the dynamic nature of policy in these areas can be seen in the President’s recent proposals for an increased federal invest-

ment in child care and for raising the minimum wage, other child care proposals pending in Congress, and the recent passage of the State Child Health Care Program which will expand health care coverage for children in low-income families. There is likely to be significant state variation in policies that affect basic supports for families. Given PRWORA's mandate that most parents work, researchers will need to investigate not just whether parents move from welfare to work, but also how family life and children's development vary with different levels and types of support. Many of the new studies noted here are taking this approach. The new research on PRWORA stands to inform the larger research agenda focused on the well-being of children in working poor families (Smith, 1997), and low-income families in general.

Notes

¹If more than five states qualify, bonuses will be paid to the five states that show the largest reduction in out-of-wedlock births and have decreased abortion rates.

²The Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements were issued as a set of recommendations in 1980 by the federal government. Although never implemented as regulations, they remain respected markers against which child care quality can be measured.

³As noted, the JOBS Observational Study involved a contrast of the human capital development stream and control groups and took place with a subset of families in the Atlanta site. Families in the labor force attachment stream were not included in the study.

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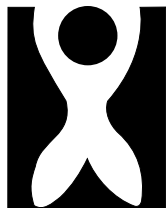
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