

# Welfare recipients and drug testing

Sociology



Welfare recipients and drug testing Luigi Chiappini COMM 200 Michelle  
Holling October 23, Welfare recipients and drug testing Almost two  
dozen states are considering enacting bills that require individuals applying  
for or receiving public benefits to undergo drug testing. These states have  
made it tough for recipients who receive welfare and food stamps. According  
to Newell (2011), welfare reform has transformed from cash assistance for  
the poor to a work-focused temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
program. The author further argues that this has made the issue of  
substance abuse a periodic policy and a programmatic concern. There have  
been vigorous debates focusing on welfare policy with respect to people with  
drug felony convictions. This has made drug tests a form of admissibility for  
the program. The prevalence of drug abuse among welfare recipients is high  
with rates between 4 and 37 percent (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). Substance abuse  
has affected the performance of several TANF recipients which has made  
policy makers pass laws that make testing mandatory. Drugs reduce  
the performance of welfare recipients and have been linked to  
unemployment, child abuse and neglect. Drug testing among welfare  
recipients is a reasonable practice that should be conducted in all states in  
the country (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). Giving welfare to individuals who may  
either directly or indirectly get involved in substance abuse is an act of  
encouraging drug use. Some of the recipients are former drug addicts, and  
the moral obligation of TANF is to prevent them from harming themselves or  
others (Macdonald, et al. 2001). From the work of Valbrun (2011), one can  
deduce that drug addicts subjected to welfare benefits cost the society a lot  
of finances in health care, law enforcement, and rehabilitation. This can be  
argued by the fact that drug addicts in the society need special concerns to  
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completely recover from addiction. Establishment of rehabilitation centers and special correctional facilities requires a lot of funds. Additionally, law enforcers find it difficult to control the influence of drug traffickers in the society. Conducting drug tests protects taxes money from being used to purchase drugs and generate drug related crimes (Pollack et. al, 2002). Sponsors and supporters of this activity claim that mandatory testing will help people remain healthy, eliminate fraud, and avoid substance abuse problems. Recipients who pass the drug test are reimbursed the incurred expenses and are allocated welfare assistance (Metsch and Pollack, 2005). Nowell (2011) argues that individuals who receive support from the government have a high probability of indulging in substance abuse than individuals who solely depend on themselves. Nowell (2011) supports this by arguing that most studies covering TANF studies have revealed higher rates of drug use of up to 37 percent among these individuals. Mandatory drug testing is constitutional according to welfare reform law (Swartz, Lurigio and Goldstein, 2000). Section 902 of the welfare reform law authorizes chemical testing to detect substance use among aid recipients. Some individuals who fail the drug test are not addicted to substance abuse. People who have used certain drugs recently are more likely to fail the drug test compared to those who have not used drugs for a long time. Some testing methods are unable to detect some conventional drugs among recipients. The precise group of illicit drug use detected depends on the testing mode and the period over which individuals have been using drugs. Drug abuse makes parents irresponsible and they neglect and abuse their children. In 2011, 17, 096 children received TANF benefits. This makes children the highest number of beneficiaries due to neglect and abuse by parents. This makes testing a

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necessary requirement to counter drug use and place beneficiaries under treatment. Some individuals who fail the drug test may not have a substance abuse problem. These individuals are locked out of the program due to the results of the drug test. The government reduces the number of those entitled to welfare assistance. Denying impoverished parents access to assistance provides resources for other state programs (Valbrun, 2011). The TANF program acts as a method of campaigning against drug use among low income earners. This group consists of the majority citizens who are affected by substance abuse. Making drug testing a requirement for eligibility discourages drug use and engagement in drug related activities. The welfare-to-work program provides employment opportunities to individuals in need who have qualifications for some professional positions. Drug testing is necessary for eliminating employees who have substance abuse problems. Many states test welfare recipients for drug use to avoid financing substance abuse and drug related activities among recipients. This is part of the welfare act of 1996, and many states have made drug testing a requirement for eligibility. This has received a lot of criticism but remains an important action before individuals become enrolled for TANF. Studies have indicated high prevalence of substance use among welfare recipients. Conducting drug tests helps eliminate individuals who have drug problems or have participated in drug activities such as trafficking. Testing also reduces the number of eligible beneficiaries. This helps the state governments save costs incurred during welfare provision programs for use in other state programs.

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