

Critical thinking on differences between the welfare system of the 1970s and the ...

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



How can Child Support Enforcement be Improved in the U. S.?

Differences between the Welfare System of the 1970's and the Current System.

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Throughout the history of making public policy to support children with the social services (welfare programs) efforts have been made to mirror changes in family dynamics. For the most part policy makers have shown a willingness to incorporate the suggestions based on social science research into public policy.

The 1970s were a big turning point for how child support problems were to be handled. Up until that time states' welfare agencies notified police for help when there was a problem locating a parent and/or collecting child support. The law directing action for child support was the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Families were organized very differently for instance there were very few female heads of families and AFDC was mainly used because a father has died. (Green Book 2011).

Then in 1975 the Title IV-D amendment was added to the Social Security Act because it was clear the make-up of families had changed. The Child Support Enforcement and Paternity Establishment Program (CSE) allowed welfare agencies to get support from " non-custodial" parents, help families not covered under the AFDC act to get help and to establish paternity of children (using DNA test). The goal was to reduce the funding burden from the public

and establish ways for families and or parents to take on more of the responsibility.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 was voted into law and replaced the AFDC program (Green Book 2011). Now social services are moving to a 'next step' of somehow keeping both parents involved with their children and meeting their responsibility of supporting their child.

The article "Marriage and Fatherhood Programs" is very helpful in understanding how the social services got to the point of supporting children by teaching parents successful relationship techniques. Research has consistently shown that a father is more likely to stay involved with his children (whether divorced or never married to the mother) if the mother has a good attitude about the father and a healthy relationship with the father (Cowan et al. 2010).

Fragile families are families the most vulnerable to having one of the parents break off relationships with their child or children due to many outside stresses. Cowan (et al. 2011) lists some of the major stresses as being faced with overwhelming odds in "maintaining stability and promoting family members well-being" while dealing with poverty, lack of good and consistent health care and difficulties forming and keeping good relationships.

The important research findings about mother-father relationship quality and their children's well being has driven methods such as preventive interventions to help mother and father maintain a healthy relationship so

fathers will remain active in a child's life; both with child support and spending time with his children (Cowan et al. 2011).

Most of the research concerning family interventions has been with married couples. But in contemporary families often the mother and father are not married at the time of the birth of their child or their children. A 1998 study on Fragile Families established two very important fundamental findings about fragile families which social services can use to really make a positive difference in families when the mother and father are not married. The first is that when the child is born the mother and father are still in a romantic relationship and have every intention of staying active in the child's life. Secondly, over time the relationship with the father and the child does not continue over time. (Cowan et al. 2011).

Cowan (et al. 2011) found that a " Supporting Father Involvement" intervention helped fathers remain involved when the intervention was used with low-income married and unmarried couples. Their conclusion is that more research is necessary to optimize the way the intervention is done for both married and unmarried couples because it is worthwhile.

A problem that still remains to be studied is how to do a cost benefit analysis on this type of social service.

The authors suggest that although difficult and no one " right" way exists for every couple the study and use of co-parenting interventions should remain a priority. When the parents are in a good relationship it helps the child in obvious and measurable ways and the whole family is healthier.

I agree that the goals are very important not only for the each parent and the child but also for the community. I would suggest that good parenting continue to be taught in high schools but the emphasis maybe needs to change. The priority should be on how to have a good committed relationship not only between married couples but also between two people that have shared commitments and responsibilities.

Even for people who aren't parents yet, they need to know that men and women can have healthy, productive relationships without any romance or sex involved. Also the social services should be able to work with schools and women's health centers to make sure that young women are comfortable with their own bodies and understand how to use contraceptives.

Works Cited

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