

Unit 9 the welfare system human services and social policy assignment

[Sociology](#)



The Welfare System The Welfare System Instructor: Dr. Michelle March
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Human Services & Social Policy To understand the “ Welfare System” one
must know its history. The American welfare system has changed
dramatically over the past 80 years. A 100 years ago, families, local
communities, and charities; typically religious based, served as the safety
net for those who had fallen on hard times.

The Great Depression of the 1930s would see a change in social policy with
the passing of President Roosevelt’s “ New Deal” establishing Social Security
and Aid to Dependent Children (ADC.) Thus was born the American Welfare
System. The U. S. welfare system stayed in the hands of the federal
government for the next sixty-one years. Many Americans were unhappy
with the welfare system, claiming that individuals were abusing the welfare
programs by not applying for jobs, having more children just to get more aid,
and staying unmarried so as to qualify for greater benefits.

Further expansion came with the Johnson’s administration in the 1960s with
the establishment of Medicare, Medicaid, Public Housing, and other
programs. During the Reagan presidency it was claimed that mothers with
infants should not be allowed to become dependent on the welfare system,
and that providing assistance for children under one year of age constituted
such “ dependency” The welfare system remained relatively unchanged till
1996 when President Clinton signed a sweeping welfare reform law that is
still a hot topic of public controversy today. When Clinton was elected he had
the intention of changing the welfare system.

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In 1996 the Republican Congress passed a reform law signed by President Clinton that gave the control of the welfare system back to the states. Conservatives claim a dramatic decline in welfare caseloads, while Liberals attribute the decline to a once healthy economy (www. welfareinfo. org). “ Compared with those of other western industrialized nations, the U. S. social safety net is exceptional in numerous ways. Federal, state, and local governments in the United States spend far less on social welfare per capita than do peer nations” (Schaefer & Simmons, 2009 p. 1). The purpose of the welfare system is to address social problems (www. policyalmanac. org (ND) retrieved 11/27/11). “ Some argue that the “ importance” of a social problem depends on two things (1) the power and social status of those who are defining the problem and urging the expenditure of resources toward a solution and (2) the sheer number of people affected. Thus, the more people affected and the greater the social power and status of those urging a solution, the more important the social problem” (Chambers & Wedel 2009 p. 7).

However, it should be understood that social problems are “ highly variable and depend on the viewer” (Chamber & Wedel 2009 p. 9). “ There are four points to consider when doing a social problem analysis: 1) Identify the way the problem is defined. 2) Identify the cause(s) to which the problem is attributed (its antecedents) and its most serious consequences. 3) Identify the ideology-the values, that is-that makes the events of concern come to be defined as a problem. 4) Identify who benefits (gains) and who suffers (loses) from the existence of the problem” (Chambers & Wedel 2009 pp. 9-10).

The welfare system is too complex a subject, and the social problems the system addresses are beyond the scope of this essay. However, I will discuss the goal and objectives for creating the welfare system, and address how these services are distributed. The federal government provides assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF is a grant given to each state to run their own welfare programs. The TANF grant requires that all recipients of welfare aid must find work within two years of receiving aid, including single parents who are required to work at least 30 hours per week.

Failure to comply with work requirements could result in loss of benefits. Eligibility for a welfare program depends on numerous factors. Eligibility is determined using gross and net income, size of the family, and any crisis situation such as medical emergencies, pregnancy, homelessness or unemployment (www.welfareinfo.org retrieved 12/12/11). A case worker is assigned to those applying for aid. They will gather all the necessary information to determine the amount and type of benefits that an individual is eligible for. The new welfare system actively discourages mothers from marrying.

As the entire emphasis is now on getting the mothers into the workforce, and adding that the period during which they can receive "benefits" greatly extends if they remain single, the new version of the welfare system is both undermining traditional family values and even contributing to the poverty level by its continuing focus on keeping mothers single and in the workforce. One cannot talk about the welfare system without a focus on child welfare.

Child welfare is a broad term that is used to describe the process of protecting children from abuse and neglect.

A comprehensive child welfare system usually has multiple components and may involve numerous social services agencies working together in a community to provide a safety net for vulnerable children. In most communities a child welfare services include investigations of child maltreatment, foster care, protective living arrangements for children, counseling, financial assistance, and adoption programs. The scope and quality of child welfare services varies a great deal from one community to another (www.welfareinfo.org retrieved 12/13/11). The purpose of the investigative program is to inquire into allegations of abuse and neglect.

Many times these referrals are screened out. Many of these investigations do not turn up any evidence of neglect or abuse however, when the children are in imminent danger of harm from further abuse or neglect, the children services investigations will turn the case over for placement. Most child welfare services also provide foster care. Foster care can consist of emergency shelters where children are housed for a few hours or days. Foster care parents who open their homes where children who need a safe haven for a few weeks or months, or long term foster care homes where children may live for years.

Some child welfare services programs also operate residential programs which are specialized to provide care for children who may suffer from extreme emotional and behavioral problems. However, there are more children in need of foster care than there are foster homes and group homes

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in which to place them, child welfare agencies typically have programs for what is known as family preservation. The purpose of these family preservation programs is to provide intense counseling and support for a multitude of family problems according to The History of the Welfare System ([www. voices. yahoo. om](http://www.voices.yahoo.com) retrieved 12/12/11). Families involved in these programs may have a combination of problems that range from substance abuse, domestic violence, emotional problems, severe mental disorders, financial difficulties, and lack of appropriate parenting skills. The family preservation programs provided through the child welfare system helped to keep children in their homes when the abuse or neglect was relatively mild. When the parents receive the proper kinds of support and intervention many of them are able to continue to provide care for their children and keep them free of abuse or neglect ([www. elfareinfo. org](http://www.elfareinfo.org) retrieved 12/14/11). Many child welfare programs also incorporate eligibility programs that provide welfare benefits to enable parents who live in poverty to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, childcare subsidies, housing subsidies, and other assistance to help these parents provide basic needs for their children. The ability to access these services allows many families to feel less stress in taking care of their children, and helps keep children from having their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter go unmet ([www. welfareinfo. org](http://www.welfareinfo.org) retrieved 12/15/11).

Most child welfare services also have programs that arrange for adoption. Adoption is necessary for child welfare programs so that permanent homes can be found for those children whose parents are unable to raise them in a safe healthy environment. The termination of parental rights is the last

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resort for families who are not able to keep their children safe, but this process occurs after all the alternatives that child welfare programs have to offer and have been tried. The welfare system in and of itself is nothing; it is a conglomeration of policies and programs.

There are three styles of welfare policy analysis: the analytic-descriptive, the value-committed, and the value-critical methods (Chambers & Wedel, 2009 p. 44). While recognizing that political occasions will arise during which is essential? The value-committed approach is rejected because it is not open to new data or conclusions. The fact argues for the value-critical style which forces into the open, the effects of ideology is inherent in the analytic method use. The analytic-descriptive method fails as a policy analysis because it commits the analyst to unattainable assumptions.

Such assumptions can be unrealistic because any judgment of social programs requires judgment of social worthiness (Chambers & Wedel, 2009, p. 44). Chambers and Wedel explain there are six policy elements which form the cornerstone of every policy and program of the welfare system. It is these elements on which the practical social policy analyst ultimately will base judgments about a policy or program. The six policy elements are as follows: 1. Goals and Objectives 2. Forms of benefits or services delivered 3. Entitlement (eligibility rules) . Administrative or organizational structure for service delivery 5. Financing method 6. Interaction among the foregoing elements These six are without which a policy or program cannot be operated, they are necessary to implement a policy or program within the welfare system (2009, p. 38). Many studies have examined the effect of the

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) on employment trends, financial security and family structure, but few have considered the implications for mental health issues.

Yet mental health is central to a key objective of welfare reform. Results suggest that before PRWORA, welfare recipients did not differ from other poor women in depressive or alcohol dependence symptoms. Ten years after the reform, welfare recipients experience more depressive symptoms than other poor women. This suggests that welfare reform left unusually symptomatic women on rolls. The finding also suggests that mental health services are critical if welfare recipients are to succeed in making the transition from welfare to work (Rote & Quandagno, June 2011, p. 29-245). Changes will come over time, administrations will continue to tweak the system here and there in the hopes of coming up with something better than previous generations. Drug testing may very well be a viable way to control abuse of the welfare system in the future too, welfare policies and programs are a hit and miss kind of thing, and it will be interesting to see what the future holds for the welfare system. Poverty is a phenomenon within a capitalistic society.

No amount of funding appropriated for the welfare system will ever be able to completely eradicate poverty. Some people, no matter how much resources they are given, cannot pull themselves out of the clutches of poverty. This has been proven time after time when poverty stricken people win the lottery and end up worse off than they were before winning. As long as there is poverty then we can hope at least in the United States of America

there is the welfare system to fall back on for the truly needy. References
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