

Some observers described the action as the first step toward repealing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. Senator Wellstone said:

This amendment speaks to the priorities of the Senate or lack of priorities of the Senate.

We have here a bill that really talks about authorization, leading to appropriation of hundreds of billions of dollars for defense, for the Pentagon.

I will talk about the priorities of some low-income families in our country. Their priorities are how to keep a roof over their children's heads. Their priorities are how to get food in their children's stomachs. . . .

Mr. President [addressed to the presiding officer of the Senate], two years ago we passed a welfare bill, and as we start to see more and more families slide deeper and deeper into poverty, and as we see around the country some of these families losing their benefits, I have not heard so much as a whisper of concern, let alone a shout of outrage, from the Senate. . . .

Current law requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide an annual report to Congress. My amendment requires . . . [it] include information about families who have move off the welfare rolls. . . .

To see the welfare rolls reduced dramatically does not mean necessarily that we have reduced poverty in this country. It doesn't mean these families have moved from welfare to economic self-sufficiency. These statistics, the drop in the welfare caseload, which has been so loudly talked about as evidence of success by Republicans, Democrats, and by this Democratic administration, doesn't tell us what is really happening. . . . It doesn't tell us whether or not these families are better off now . . . or whether they have fallen further into poverty. It doesn't tell us if the mothers can find work. It doesn't tell us if they are making enough of an income to lift themselves and their children out of poverty. . . .

No one seems to know what has happened to these families. . . . I am worried that they are just disappearing and this amendment is all about a new class of citizens in our country. I call them "The Disappeared."

What is going on here? What is happening to these women and children? *Should we not know?* . . .

Below poverty wages

Speaking in strong support of Senator Wellstone's amendment, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) stated on the Senate floor on May 25, 1999:

The most important indicator of welfare reform's success is not just declining welfare caseloads. It is the well-being of these low-income parents and their children after they leave the welfare system. . . . Millions of families have left the welfare rolls. . . . The obvious question is whether former welfare recipients are doing well, or barely surviving, worse off than before. The data we do have about former welfare recipients is not encouraging. According to a study by the Children's

Defense Fund and the National Coalition on the Homeless, most former welfare recipients earn below poverty wages after leaving the welfare system. . . .

Gore defends attacks on the poor

On June 15, 1999, Vice President Al Gore, Jr. returned to his native Confederacy in Carthage, Tennessee, to launch his Presidential campaign. There he defended his welfare bill that kicked immigrants off public assistance, and condemned welfare families to slave-labor programs. In a complete cover-up of what has happened under his welfare "reform," Gore said:

I want all of our communities to be working communities. We have moved more than 6 million people off our welfare rolls; now we must make sure the jobs and opportunities are there. . . . I want to extend our prosperity to the unskilled and underprivileged, to Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta, to our farms and inner cities, to our new immigrants — *y tambien en las comunidades.*

Case Studies

California destitution rises as welfare ends

by Marcia Merry Baker

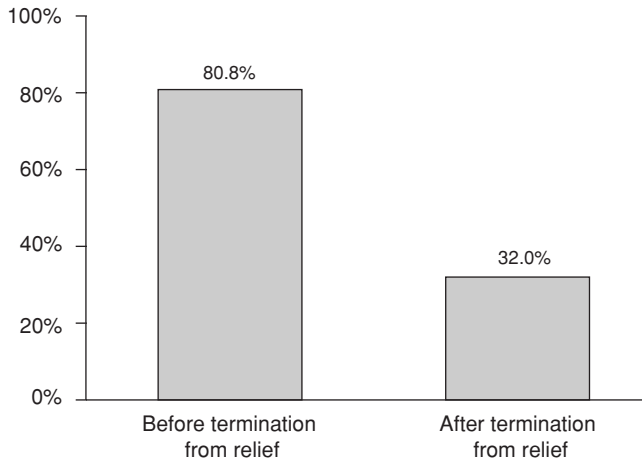
Beginning in July 1998, the County of Los Angeles began implementing a time-limit policy on eligibility for welfare payments, called "General Relief" (GR), for those designated as employable. The limit for receiving welfare was set at five months out of twelve. As of July 1, payments to the first group of 6,352 individuals were stopped, and over the subsequent seven months, to Feb. 1, 1999, a total of 15,000 individuals lost their GR benefits. Ninety-seven percent were between ages 20 and 64, and 63% were male.

A detailed follow-up study showed that, overall, the rate of hunger, homelessness, dependence, and criminal recourse increased measurably for these individuals. The study was done by Dr. Ailee Moon and Rebecca Hawes, of the UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, and published in April 1999. Summing up their report, they state, "In concluding, we believe that the adverse impact of GR time limits, especially in the areas of basic human needs, such as food and housing, is substantial enough to warrant re-examination of the policy."

The study approach sent interviewers to homeless shelters, social service offices, and food pantries, to canvass individuals about specifics of their circumstances during the last three months before termination of GR payments, and their

FIGURE 1

Eating at least two meals on most days declines in Los Angeles County



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

circumstances after losing benefits for at least three months. Complete interviews were done for 174 individuals.

We here present specifics adapted from the report’s executive summary (subheads have been added).

Findings of the Moon-Hawes report

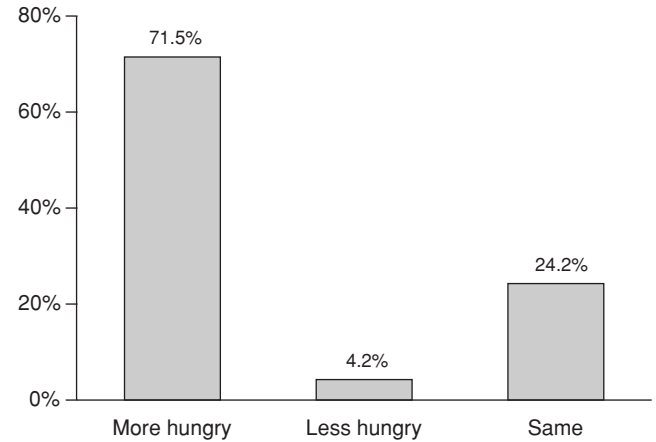
Food and hunger (Figures 1 and 2, and Table 1): Before discontinuance of general relief benefits, 81% of respondents reported having eaten at least two meals on most days. After losing benefits, the percentage dropped significantly, to 32%. Findings further suggest significant changes in the pattern of how respondents obtained food before and after the loss of GR benefits. For example, when respondents were asked to identify all sources of food, 81% reported buying and preparing their own food as one of several ways of obtaining food while receiving GR benefits. The percentage fell dramatically to 38% after losing GR. In contrast, the percentages of those who obtained food at missions or soup kitchens and homeless shelters rose considerably, from 42% and 30% prior to the cut-off, to 62% and 53% after the cut-off, respectively.

Food stamps (Figure 3): The percentage of respondents who received food stamps dropped from 86% before, to 30% after termination of GR benefits. Further analyses indicate that the loss of GR cash income has a greater adverse impact than the loss of food stamps on their ability to obtain two meals on most days.

Housing and homelessness (Figure 4): Changes in housing arrangements after the loss of GR benefits were common phenomena for more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents. Major changes occurred in the areas of increased homelessness, from 15% to 38%, and decreased living in single-room

FIGURE 2

Hunger increases in Los Angeles County after termination of welfare



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

occupancy hotels, from 28% to 12%, as well as a decrease in rentals of houses, condominiums, or apartments, from 15% to 7%.

Current work-related activities (Figure 5): Forty-three percent of respondents were currently holding some kind of job, including part-time or “odd jobs.” Among those who had a job, the type and number of hours they worked per week

TABLE 1

Reliance on charities for food increases, after welfare payments terminate

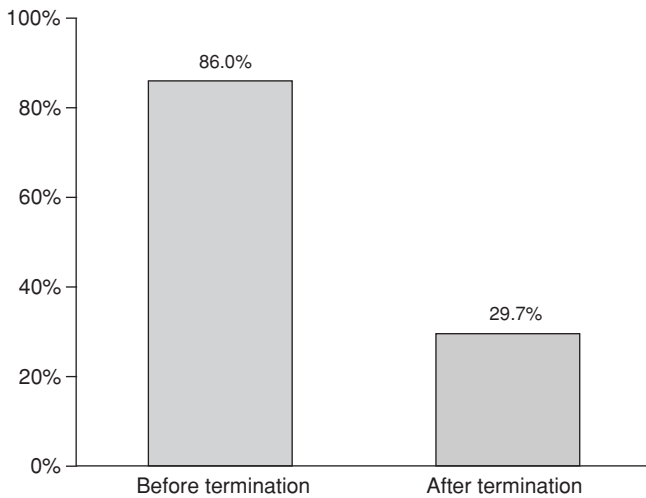
Food source	Percent of those using food sources*	
	Before termination	After termination
Buy and prepare meals	81%	38%
Fast food	48	26
Cars/trucks	28	37
Food pantries	41	43
Mission or soup kitchen	42	62
Homeless shelters	30	53
Street food programs	34	45
Dumpsters or trash	12	19
Free food from restaurant	13	15
Family or friends	47	53
Neighbors	24	23
Other	5	9

*Based on multiple responses

Source: UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, A. Moon and R. Hawes, April 1999.

FIGURE 3

Receipt of food stamps declines in Los Angeles County after termination of welfare



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Public Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D., and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

varied widely, ranging from two hours of cleaning yards to 60 hours of recycling, from selling plasma two days per week, to prostituting all day. Specifically, 31% of the working respondents identified recycling as their primary job, followed by 25% in various kinds of construction and domestic work, including unloading trucks, house painting, gardening, and babysitting.

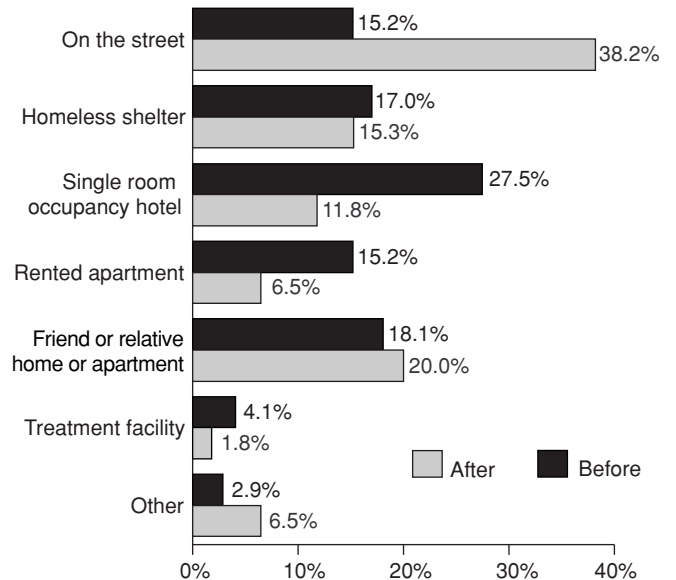
Barriers to employment (Figure 6): When asked to provide their experience with major barriers to employment, a multiple-response question, respondents frequently identified lack of education, training, or skills (44%), lack of transportation (36%), lack of housing and other resources (22%), and facing discrimination (18%) as significant barriers. To a lesser degree, 15% described the lack of hygiene or clothing, 11% health or disability issues, and 10% the lack of available jobs, as employment barriers.

Management of GR grant loss (Figure 7): Respondents have managed the loss of GR benefits through a variety of income-generating activities. In this multiple-response question, the most frequent activities (31%) were doing “odd jobs,” while 25% sought agency and community support, and 21% indicated asking for help from family or friends.

Family, friends, and community supports: After GR termination, respondents reported increased reliance on family and/or friends for both cash assistance, from 24% to 41%, and non-cash assistance, from 32% to 70%. The percentage of respondents who utilized services provided by churches or community organizations also rose, from 57% before losing GR, to 68% after (see also Table 1).

FIGURE 4

Housing arrangements worsen in Los Angeles County after termination of welfare



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Public Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D., and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

FIGURE 5

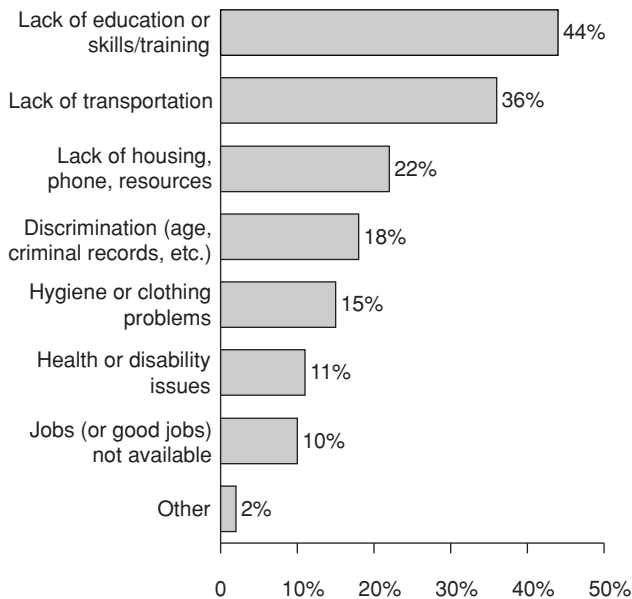
Types of current jobs, former general relief recipients, Los Angeles County



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Public Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

FIGURE 6

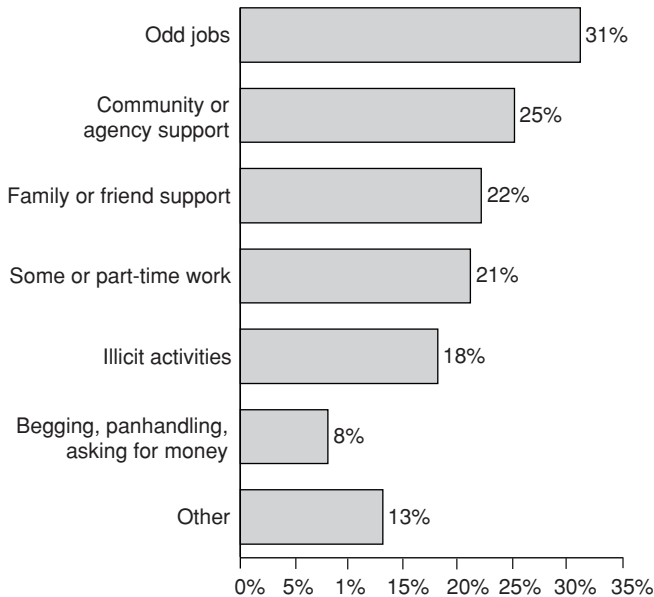
Barriers to employment, former general relief recipients, Los Angeles County



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

FIGURE 7

Management of income loss, former general relief recipients, Los Angeles County



Source: UCLA School of Policy and Social Research, Ailee Moon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Hawes, MSW, April 1999.

How a crime against humanity worked in Philadelphia

by Marianna Wertz

As of March 3, 1999, two years after Gov. Tom Ridge’s (R) draconian Act 35 became law, any Pennsylvania resident who has received 24 months of welfare cash assistance was required to be working or participating in a work activity for a minimum of 20 hours per week, or be sanctioned and potentially lose all benefits. A work activity may be unsubsidized work (i.e., slave labor), subsidized work, work experience, workfare, on-the-job training, or community service, but it does not include any educational component. When Ridge rammed through Act 35 in 1996, Lyndon LaRouche denounced it as a “crime against humanity,” prosecutable under the Nuremberg Code, because it would eventually result in the death of thousands of poor, elderly, and sick Pennsylvanians.

An estimated 25-35,000 heads of household in Philadelphia will hit this deadline by December. With a majority of the Pennsylvania Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload (Philadelphia has 61,000 heads of household and more than 130,000 children), the city’s one comprehensive job-creation program, Greater Philadelphia Works, began in June 1998 and plans to move only 15,000 clients into the workforce over the next two years. Finding even those jobs, however, won’t be easy. Since 1979, manufacturing jobs in the city of Philadelphia have declined 53%, and the city has lost a total of 250,000 jobs in the last 25 years, while suburbs—to which there is limited, if any, mass transportation—have gained 750,000 jobs in the same period. A significant number of jobs have been lost in the process of mergers and consolidations that have permeated the Philadelphia region, particularly affecting low-wage employment in the health and banking sectors.

Not only are there insufficient jobs available, but as Philadelphia City Councilman Angel Ortiz reported in January to the City Council’s Joint Committee on Public Health and Human Services and Law and Government, those welfare recipients who are now in need of work are mismatched for the jobs available. About 30% of Philadelphia’s TANF clients are functionally illiterate, 21% lack English proficiency, more than 50% lack a high-school diploma, 40% may be addicted to drugs or alcohol, and thousands have been victims of domestic violence. Despite this, both Federal and state laws place strict limits on the amount of time that a welfare recipient may spend on education and training without simultane-