



Children of Reform

Some measures of child well-being improve in Pennsylvania

The number of Pennsylvania children on welfare has fallen dramatically following enactment of reform measures, and several other indicators of child well-being have improved.

But the post-reform years have not been entirely free of concern. Children are being ordered into foster care and other out-of-home placements at historically high rates across Pennsylvania. And some measures showing recent improvement, such as teen birth rates, remain higher than a decade ago.

The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 put in motion reforms intended to reduce the cost of anti-poverty initiatives and encourage self-sufficiency.

The precise impact of welfare reform in Pennsylvania is unclear. Many factors influence social conditions that affect children and families, not just changes in welfare policy. What can be reported with certainty are statistical measures of child and family well-being during the years following welfare reform.

Jobs & Assistance

The number of Pennsylvania children on cash assistance peaked at 415,369 in 1992, then began a steady decline. But the decrease since 1996 has been dramatic.

In 2000, the number of Pennsylvania children enrolled in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – the cash assistance program that replaced Aid to Families

with Dependent Children – fell to 195,699.

The state unemployment rate also fell following reform. In 1999, unemployment dropped to 4.4% – more than a 62% decrease over the 1983 rate. But the steady decline in unemployment began in 1993, before welfare reform was enacted.

Medical Assistance

TANF enrollment may have plummeted, but the number of children poor enough to be enrolled in Medicaid – the state/federal health insurance for the poor – is still higher than it was a decade earlier.

In 2000, a little more than 23% of Pennsylvania's children were enrolled in Medicaid. About 17.6% of the children received the health insurance in 1990.

Child Abuse

Child abuse rates have fallen steadily since the enactment of welfare reform laws. However, the rate had begun to decline in 1992, long before welfare-to-work policies took hold in

Impact of Reform in Question

Although many measures of child well-being improved after reform, positive trends in child abuse and other rates were seen before sweeping changes in welfare were made.

Pennsylvania.

In 1999, the child abuse rate in the state was reported to be 1.8 substantiated cases per 1,000 children. In 1996, the rate was 2.2 cases per 1,000 children. The rate peaked in 1992, when there were 3 cases of abuse per 1,000 children.

Out-Of-Home Placement

Despite lower numbers of reported abuse cases, the rate of children placed in foster care and other temporary settings has risen statewide for longer than a decade, although the increase appears to have slowed since 1997.

Children are typically put into temporary out-of-home placement because of abuse and neglect. Several factors influence such placement numbers, including the efficiency of juvenile courts. The rate of out-of-home placement in Pennsylvania rose from 5.5 per 1,000 children to nearly 8 children in placement for every 1,000 children in the state.

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Indicators Of The Well-Being Of Pennsylvania's Children

YEAR	AFDC/TANF (total children enrolled)	CHILD ABUSE (per 1000 children)	OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS (per 1000 chil- dren)	SCHOOL DROP-OUTS (% of all students grades 9-12)	BIRTHS TO TEENS (% of all births)	CHIP ENROLL- MENT (% of all children ages 0-18)	MEDICAID ENROLLMENT (% of all children ages 0-18)
1989	349,905	2.7	5.5	4.7	8.9		16.8
1990	343,241	2.8	6.0	4.2	8.8		17.6
1991	367,279	2.8	6.2	3.8	9.0		19.3
1992	392,840	3.0	6.5	3.6	9.0		21.4
1993	405,283	2.7	6.5	3.7	9.2		22.6
1994	415,369	2.4	6.7	3.7	9.5	1.0	24.3
1995	410,274	2.4	7.2	4.1	9.6	1.6	25.0
1996	375,770	2.2	7.5	4.0	9.4	1.6	24.9
1997	333,031	2.0	7.8	3.8	9.3	1.7	24.4
1998	278,296	1.9	7.88	3.89	9.2	1.8	23.6
1999	233,563	1.8	7.98	3.75		2.3	23.1
2000	195,699					2.9	23.1

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Other Measures

Other measures have fallen slightly in Pennsylvania of late.

- The percent of high school students who drop out of school fell from 4% of all students in 1996 to 3.75% in 1999. But a more marked decline was seen from 1989-1995, when the rate fell from 4.7% to 3.7%.
- Births to teenage mothers decreased from 9.4% of all births in 1996 to 9.2% in 1998. However, the 1998 rate is still higher than the

references

This report is based on information from the databases of child and family well-being indicators maintained by Maria Zeglen Townsend, Ph.D., Director of the Child and Family Welfare Indicators Project of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

The databases include measures of health, poverty, welfare, childcare, education, and other well-being indicators gathered from all Pennsylvania counties.

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This report and others can be found on the Internet by visiting: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/background.htm