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National School Lunch Data

Number Of Needy Children Increasing In Area Schools

The number of children poor enough to be eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches is on the rise in Allegheny County.

And the distribution of low-income families appears to be widening as suburban school districts see more and more of their students becoming eligible for the federal lunch program. In several districts, the majority of students are poor enough to qualify.

National School Lunch Program data show that 27% of total student population of 43 county districts, including Pittsburgh city schools, was eligible for the federal lunch program last school year – 22% more than in 1991-92.

A free or reduced-price school lunch is available to a child whose family income is within 130% or 185% of federal poverty thresholds.

“Overall in Allegheny County, there has been an increase in low-income children and there has been a greater increase in some areas than in others,” said Maria Zeglen Townsend, PhD, Director of the Health, Education, and Welfare Indicators Project, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

GAPS Program

Helping Welfare Recipients Work With A Little Support, Guidance

Most were young mothers who had grown up poor. Few had any experience holding down a job. Finding reliable child care and transportation were but a few of the challenges many faced as they moved from welfare into the workplace.

All volunteered to participate in GAPS, a privately-funded job retention program developed to help them make the transition.

Six months after starting their jobs, 79% of the more than 500 Allegheny County welfare recipients who en-

Dr. Townsend examined a range of data on school-age children and family incomes in the county as part of a before- and after-school needs assessment.

Her review found:

- Some districts have exceptionally large numbers of low-income students.
- The majority of the districts with large populations of low-income students are found east of Pittsburgh and in the Mon Valley.
- District-wide data sometimes mask pockets of greater need at individual schools.

Measuring Need

Although school lunch data are not used to determine

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official poverty, it is considered one measure of economic need.

Children whose family incomes fall within 130% of federal poverty thresholds are eligible for a free school lunch. To be eligible for a reduced-price lunch, a child's family income must be within 185% of federal poverty thresholds. Poverty thresholds vary according to family size.

The U.S. Census reports the number of Americans whose incomes fall below official poverty thresholds. Poverty-related statistics are collected only from a sample of people in a census tract. The most recent census data are for 1990.

The 1990 census shows that 17% of the county's 111,234 children ages 5-11 years old are living in families with incomes below poverty thresholds, Dr. Townsend reports. In the 1998-99 school year, 32% of Allegheny County children in grades kindergarten through sixth were eligible for the federal lunch program.

While census data may provide a more accurate accounting of the official poor, recent studies suggest that federal poverty thresholds underestimate the minimum income needed to sustain a family in America today – that many families above the poverty line, in fact, are poor when the actual prices they pay for food, housing, and other essentials are considered.

When local costs and taxes are considered, the number of low-income children and working-age adults in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County rises to 2-2½ times the official federal poverty estimates, the University of Pittsburgh University Center for Social and Urban Research reported in a 1997 study.

More Needy Children

All but eight school districts in Allegheny County saw an increase in the number of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches between the 1991-92 and 1998-99 school years, according to federal lunch program data.

In some districts, the number of children eligible for the lunch program is extremely high. In Duquesne, 90% of the students were eligible for the federal lunch program last year – a 70% increase over 1991-92. In Wilkesburg, 86% of the students qualified.

Other districts to experience large increases include Gateway, Penn Hills, Shaler Area, and Sto-Rox.

A geographic trend in the distribution of low-income children is also suggested by the school lunch data. The eastern suburbs and the Mon Valley hold the largest number of school districts in which at least 25% of the student population is eligible for the federal lunch program.

A quarter or more of the student population was eligible for free or reduced lunches in 17 school districts last year, 12 of which were in the Mon Valley or eastern suburbs. In 1991-92, low-income students made up 25% or more of the school population in 14 districts and 11 were in the Mon Valley or eastern suburbs.

Pockets of Need

Federal school lunch data also identifies areas within districts where the concentration of eligible students is higher – in some cases, much higher – than a district's overall population of low-income children.

In Pittsburgh, for example, 61% of all elementary students are eligible for the federal lunch program. However, in 25 of the 87 public and parochial elementary schools in the city, 75% or more of the students qualify.

Outside of Pittsburgh, nine elementary schools in seven school districts had much higher concentrations of students eligible for the National School Lunch Program than the overall percentage for all of the elementary schools in their districts. For example, in the Steel Valley School District, where 52% of all elementary students were eligible for the federal lunch program, 100% of the students in Franklin Elementary and 85% of the students in Barrett Elementary qualified.

Populations of low-income students significantly higher than district-wide percentages were also found at individual elementary schools in the Gateway, Shaler Area, Highlands, Riverview, Moon Area, and Fox Chapel school districts. "If you just look at the overall average for the school districts, you can miss high pockets of poverty," Dr. Townsend said.

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Developments is a quarterly publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, which is solely responsible for its content. The Office is a program of the University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) and is sponsored by the Howard Heinz Endowment, the Richard K. Mellon Foundation, the University of Pittsburgh, and UCSUR, and it is co-directed by Christina J. Groark, PhD and Robert B. McCall, PhD. *Developments* is edited and written by Jeffery Fraser and produced by Mary Ellen Colella at the Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh, 2017 Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. **Phone:** (412) 624-7425; **Fax:** (412) 624-1187; **E-Mail:** colella+@pitt.edu; **Internet:** www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/.

**Eligibility for School Lunch Program
(Entire districts for years 1991-92 and 1998-99)**

District	1991-92 % Eligible Free/ Reduced Lunch	1998-99 % Eligible Free/ Reduced Lunch
Allegheny Valley	23	28
Avonworth	13	16
Baldwin-Whitehall	12	13
Bethel Park	5	6
Brentwood Borough	18	16
Carlynton	N/A	N/A
Chartiers	19	20
Clairton	54	69
Cornell	N/A	53
Deer Lakes	20	17
Duquesne	53	90
East Allegheny	42	39
Elizabeth Forward	18	22
Fox Chapel	10	12
Gateway	14	20
Hampton	6	6
Highlands	30	35
Keystone Oaks	16	20
McKeesport Area	49	53
Montour	7	10
Moon Area	7	8
Mt. Lebanon	1	3
North Allegheny	2	2
North Hills	10	14
Northgate	30	33
Penn Hills	23	31
Pine-Richland	8	4
Pittsburgh City	53	57
Plum	14	12
Quaker Valley	11	14
Riverview	25	31
Shaler Area	14	19
South Allegheny	30	35
South Fayette	17	12
South Park	9	9
Steel Valley	39	43
Sto-Rox	52	71
Upper St. Clair	1	1
West Allegheny	17	16
West Jefferson Hills	10	8
West Mifflin Area	33	30
Wilkesburg	75	86
Woodland Hills	42	49

Regulatory Factors In Early Childhood Services Influence Young Children

Government regulation of early childhood services, such as child care and preschool, is an issue important to providers and parents and one that has attracted considerable debate across Pennsylvania in recent months.

The debate touches on several questions, including which areas government should regulate and what standards should be applied.

A recent review of research related to early childhood services concludes that certain factors that can potentially be regulated appear to influence the physical health, safety, mental health, and school readiness of young children.

Conclusions drawn from a review of the research are reported in a briefing paper, *Regulatory Factors in Early Childhood Services*, prepared by the Universities Children's Partnership, a collaboration of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and the Pennsylvania State University Prevention Research Center.

The following is a summary of the conclusions reported in the briefing paper. Some of the conclusions are supported directly by research and others are supported indirectly by inference.

Group Size

Conclusion: *Group size should be limited (e.g., 6 or fewer infants, 12 or fewer toddlers, and 18 or fewer preschoolers), because smaller group size increases the individualized attention that children receive from caregivers, which, in turn, improves children's physical health, safety, mental health, and cognitive development.*

More specifically:

- Smaller group size is associated with less risk of infection in child care.
- Experts suggest that the group size be limited to twice the maximum number of children allowed per adult (i.e., twice the maximum child-staff ratio).
- Smaller child care centers, not just those with smaller class sizes, have lower rates of disease.
- Smaller group size improves the caregiving behaviors and the safety of children. The North Carolina

Office of Child Care Licensing, for example, found that the severity and frequency of complaints (i.e., reports of abuse and neglect) were worse in child care centers serving 30 or more children.

- Smaller group size appears to promote prosocial and creative behavior in children.
- Smaller group size enables caregivers to play a larger role in children's day-to-day activities, which may improve the mental health of children in child care.
- Children in smaller groups show greater gains on the Preschool Inventory and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT, a measure of receptive vocabulary).
- Smaller group size is associated with more developmentally-appropriate classroom activities than larger group size.

Child-Staff Ratios

Conclusion: *Child-staff ratios should be low; lower ratios are associated with better health and safety and more advanced social and cognitive competence, because caregivers more are able to interact with children individually and engage in less restrictive behavior (i.e., commands, reprimands) when they are in charge of fewer children.*

More specifically:

- Lower child-staff ratios tend to reduce the transmission of disease.
- Lower child-staff ratios are associated with fewer situations involving potential danger, such as children climbing on furniture, and child abuse.
- Lower child-staff ratios are associated with less distress in infants and toddlers, less apathy and distress in infants, and more social competence. Children in classrooms with lower child-staff ratios engage in more talk and play and display more gestural and vocal imitation than children in classrooms with higher child-staff ratios, and children who engage more frequently in conversations with caregivers tend to be better developed socially.
- Lower child-staff ratios promote positive caregiver interaction with children, which, in turn, improves children's social and emotional development.
- Lower child-staff ratios are associated with more verbal communication between caregivers and children, which appears to foster language development in children. More adult-child verbal interactions predict better scores on language inventories, whereas more

peer verbal interactions predict lower scores on these measures.

- Lower child-staff ratios allow caregivers to engage in more educational activities with children, such as teaching, and promoting problem-solving.

Age Mix

Conclusion: *Children should be separated into homogeneous age groups, because such groups have fewer diseases, possibly fewer injuries, and better mental health.*

More specifically:

- The separation of children into groups based on their chronological age and developmental level may reduce the spread of disease in child care.
- The separation of children into groups based on their chronological ages may decrease injury rates. Caregivers spend less time with older children when they are also responsible for infants, thus, they may spend less time with ambulatory children making them less able to protect those children from harmful situations.
- The separation of children into groups based on their chronological ages improves children's social competence, such as how they interact with peers and adults, and their knowledge of others.
- The separation of children into groups based on their chronological ages may be less beneficial for children's cognitive development than for other areas of development.

Staff Qualifications

Conclusion: *Caregivers should be encouraged or required to have as much general education and/or specific training in child development, health, and safety as possible, because educated and trained caregivers are more likely to promote the physical and mental health, safety, and cognitive development of the children in their care.*

More specifically:

- Child care directors who have more experience and education may be more likely to monitor staff, which promotes children's health.
- Caregivers with more education engage in more sensitive and positive interactions with children, which are thought to lead to lower disease rates.



DATING VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS: RISK FACTORS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT AND RESEARCH

Special Report

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development
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By
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Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), or violence in dating relationships, is a serious problem in the United States, involving significant numbers of men and women as victims and as perpetrators.

The consequences can be grave. Victims risk physical harm, with women being more likely to suffer injuries. Injuries from IPV result in an estimated 250,000 emergency room visits each year.¹

IPV is particularly troubling during adolescence. Among early and middle adolescents, who range in age from 10-17 years old, estimated rates of IPV have been reported as high as 42%. In addition to the risk of injury, dating violence among adolescents may also influence relationship patterns that carry over into adulthood.

Much work remains to be done to improve the methodology and scope of research into this important issue. Available studies, however, shed some light on the characteristics of IPV and the adolescents involved, as well as suggest targets for intervention and directions for future research.

THE PROBLEM

Studies report that 11% to 42% of adolescents aged 10-17 years old experience IPV at some point in their young lives. Among later adolescents, who range in age from 18 years to their mid-20s, rates of IPV range from 21% to 55%.

Although determining the true rate of IPV among adolescents is difficult given the wide differences reported in available studies, several general characteristics of violence within dating relationships seem clear:

- A large share of the adolescent population experience violence within the context of a dating relationship.
- Both boys and girls are involved in inflicting and receiving physical violence within dating relationships.

- Girls and women report being recipients of more sexual violence than men.
- Women also report inflicting and receiving more physical violence than men.

Injuries

The reported injury rates among adolescents who experience IPV are high. And when IPV occurs, girls and women are more likely to be the ones injured.

Among early and middle adolescents, for example, one study found that 70% of the girls and 52% of the boys who had experienced IPV sustained injury. Of those injured, 9% of females and 8% of males went to a hospital emergency room for treatment.²

In one study of IPV among late adolescents, women were significantly more likely to report mild injuries, such as small cuts and bruises; moderate injuries, such as cuts that required stitches; and severe injuries that included fractured limbs and permanent disability.³

Mutual Violence

Although many people believe that males are the perpetrators of violence and females are the victims, those roles, in fact, are not so clearly defined in cases of IPV. In adolescent dating relationships that involve violence, for example, research suggests that in many cases both partners inflict violence as well as receive it.

Mutually violent relationships heighten the risk of injury. The mean amounts of violence received and injuries sustained in these types of relationships are reported to be greater than in relationships involving one-sided violence.⁴

Several studies have found that between 42% and 72% of early and middle adolescents who have experienced IPV say they have been both the perpetrator and the victim. Very few studies report on mutual violence in dating relationships among late adolescents. However, in one study of undergraduates, about 60% of men and women reported they had been involved in a mutually violent relationship at some point in their lives.⁵

Gender Differences

The perception that girls are typically the victims

of physical violence in a dating relationship rather than the ones who inflicts it is called into question in several studies of high school students who had experienced IPV.

One such study found that 29% of females and 4% of males reported being perpetrators of IPV and that 26% of the males and 8% of the females reported being victims.⁶ Narrower gender differences were reported in one of the most methodologically sound studies of adolescent IPV. It found that 21% of male 12th grade students and 26% of females reported being the perpetrators.⁷

Although many studies find that more girls report inflicting physical violence than boys, firm conclusions are difficult to draw. Reported rates vary and some studies have failed to find significant differences in gender. Reported rates may support findings among adults that suggest women, in general, remember and report more violent incidents than men. It may also be that because men are socialized to be more aggressive, interactions with intimate partners that involve violence may not be as meaningful or memorable. Also, the impact and perceived meaning of violence experienced by males and females may be quite different.

In terms of *sexual* IPV, however, significantly more adolescent girls report being the victim. For example, one study found that among high school students, 16% of girls and 4% of boys reported having experienced sexual dating violence.⁸

RISK FACTORS

Several factors that may increase the likelihood of adolescent dating violence have been identified in a number of studies. Areas explored include the reasons adolescents give for IPV, their relationships, family experiences, and characteristics of their personalities.

The developmental context in which this type of violence occurs is another factor to consider. Adolescence is a unique time of development marked by physical and psychosocial growth and maturity, all of which may influence behavior in relationships.

Adolescence

Traditionally, adolescence was described as a period of “storm and stress” characterized by turbulence and transition. While adolescence is clearly a time of transition, current researchers and theorists no longer consider emotional instability and conflict to be inevitable parts of adolescence.

Researchers identify the transition into adolescence beginning as early as 10, when pubescence begins, and ending when the individual completes formal education, is autonomous from parents, and is fulfilling adult role

expectations. For many Americans, the period of adolescence stretches into their 20’s.

Studies identify several general characteristics of adolescence, including the following:

- Boys’ physical development, although beginning later than girls’, usually surpasses that of girls’ by mid-adolescence, when they are 15 to 17 years old. By mid-to late-adolescence, most boys have surpassed girls in both stature and strength.
- Gender roles become more salient and rigid during adolescence. In general, boys are socialized to be independent, aggressive, and confident; girls, to be passive, dependent, affectionate, and sensitive.
- Interactions with peers change during adolescence. After approximately age 12, friendships among girls continue to be characterized by close-knit and intimate relationships, while boys’ relationships tend to be highly competitive and focused on dominance.
- Reasons for dating and partner selection vary by stage of adolescence. Early and middle adolescents are more likely to list recreation and status as reasons for dating; late adolescents were more likely to list companionship, sexual activity, and mate selection.⁹

Reasons for Conflict

For adolescents, regardless of age, violence in dating relationships is interpreted as anger, confusion, or love. Perceived reasons for conflict include jealousy, self-defense, intimidation, communication difficulties, and the use of alcohol and drugs.

For example, a study of adolescents ranging in age from 10 to 17 years old, found that the “aggressor” most frequently interpreted his or her behavior as arising from confusion (60%), anger (54%), and love (31%).¹⁰ Recipients of abuse interpreted their partner’s behavior as a sign of anger (71%), confusion (40%), or love (27%).

Intimidation and self-defense are also frequently perceived reasons for IPV. Adolescent men are perceived as more likely to inflict violence to intimidate and adolescent women are viewed as more likely to inflict violence in self-defense.

Relationship Characteristics

Relationship factors that have been examined include the number of dating partners, frequency of dating, length of relationship, and seriousness or meaningfulness of relationship.

Little is known about relationship characteristics

and IPV during early and middle adolescence. And what is known is contradictory, perhaps because it is unlikely that many relationships during this stage of adolescence last longer than six months and even fewer last as long as two years.

However, studies suggest that longer relationships, more frequent dating, greater numbers of partners, and more serious relationships are factors that increase the risk of experiencing IPV among late adolescent couples who range in age from 18 years to mid-20s.

Family Factors

Studies of adult IPV generally support the social learning theory that views violent behavior as a learned response based on experiencing and witnessing physical violence within the family of origin. For example, a recent study reports that 60% to 80% of abusive adult males and 20% to 30% of wives of abusive husbands come from violent homes.¹¹

Evidence that exposure to violence as a child increases the likelihood of being involved in a violent relationship as an adolescent has been reported in several studies. Studies of late adolescents suggest that males are much more likely than females to inflict or receive violence in a dating relationship if they had been exposed to child abuse. However, the evidence is far less clear among early and middle adolescents.

Although the association between violence within the home and dating violence appears strong, it does not explain all the variance associated with experiencing IPV. Some children raised in violent homes do not experience IPV, and some children who were not raised in violent homes nevertheless become involved in IPV.

Personality Factors

The role of personality factors and psychopathology are important but understudied topics for understanding IPV in adolescence. Although the studies are few and, in some cases, contradictory, they identify poor self-esteem, depression, and drug and alcohol use as factors related to dating violence.

One of the more comprehensive studies to examine personality factors suggests that when poor self-esteem and symptoms of depression are found among girls, they are more likely to inflict violence in an intimate relationship. For boys, a history of antisocial behavior, such as delinquency, makes it more likely they will inflict IPV.¹² Such findings are consistent with adolescent development research showing that boys tend to have externalizing problems and girls tend to have internalizing problems.

Drug and alcohol use is one of the more consistent

factors found to be related to adolescent IPV. In one study, 33% of the adolescents reported that both partners were drinking during their most violent incident, and 25% reported using other drugs.¹³

Harm To Relationship

Significant numbers of adolescents appear to believe that dating violence does not harm – and may even improve – a relationship, despite the price that can be paid in injuries and feelings of anger, hurt, and regret.

The perception that IPV is a benign or a positive factor in a relationship is reflected in studies across all stages of adolescence. A study of early and middle adolescents who experienced IPV reported that 23% felt their relationship improved, 35% felt it was unchanged, 12% said it worsened, and 23% ended the relationship.¹⁴ Among late adolescents, 37% reported that relationships improved, and 41% said relationships did not change as a result of violence.¹⁵

TREATMENT IMPLICATIONS

Many factors appear to be related to IPV during adolescence, and different factors may be predominant in different situations and with different couples. For this reason, it seems important that interventions be tailored to the needs of different individuals.

Available research suggests that factors important to implementing a treatment plan include experiences with violence in the family of origin, personal history of violence and delinquency, and mental health status.

Also important is the finding that adolescents often do not perceive violence in a relationship as destructive or unhealthy and, in fact, may believe it improves a relationship. Such findings underscore the importance of identifying limits and personal safety within a relationship. If relationships are not likely to end due to violence, it may be helpful to teach youth how to recognize when a relationship is becoming unsafe and how to leave it safely.

Research also suggests that adolescents should be taught ways to communicate differently and be provided with skills to assist in navigating this new arena of relationships. Interaction patterns from same-gender relationships in childhood may need to be adapted for intimate relationships in adolescence and adulthood.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Findings from research on IPV during adolescence suggest a number of important issues, including a high rate of IPV, a tendency among girls to report inflicting

violence at rates equal to or higher than boys, evidence that violence within the family is related to violence within an intimate relationship, and that girls sustain more injuries and experience more negative emotions as a result than boys.

However, the research to date consists primarily of retrospective reports by individuals. Thus, while attempting to deal with some interesting and important issues, the current research on IPV during adolescence leaves many questions unanswered.

The shortcomings of available research identify directions that future research might follow. For example:

- Conceptually, one important question to be addressed is *involvement with IPV over time and across relationships*. While the information gathered to date helps to raise awareness of the problem of violence in dating relationships, it does not provide valuable data on adolescents who are most likely to continue to be involved with IPV into adulthood.
- The *roles* played by partners in violence need to be more clearly delineated. It is one thing to identify who inflicted and who received violence, but it is quite another to clearly identify who *initiated* the violence in specific situations. This distinction could lead to a better understanding of characteristics associated with the initiation of violence among intimate partners.
- The reported *motivation* of the inflictor of violence and the perceived motivation of the inflictor by the recipient is a frequently overlooked factor.
- In general, data on the *impact* of dating violence is scant to nonexistent. Some studies reported on physical injury rates, but none adequately assessed the psychological impact of experience with dating violence.
- Also, the rates of reported experience with violence in a dating relationship call into question the *acceptability* of the use of violence. Prevalence rates are high and the impact on the relationship is not always negative. Such findings suggest it is important to explore what matters to the adolescents with regard to dating violence.

The importance of developing a fuller understanding of IPV among adolescents is clear. IPV can, and often

does, result in physical and emotional damage. Moreover, evidence suggests that dating is a training ground for relationships later in life – that patterns developed in adolescence may carry over into adulthood.¹⁶

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *This report is a summary, written with the assistance of Jeffery Fraser, of a more comprehensive paper by the author that was submitted to the Clinical Psychology Program, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh. References noted in the text of the report follow.*

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(GAPS continued from Page 1)

ployed is unclear. The report cautions that the study is not intended to measure program impact. And several factors, including a relatively high level of education of those enrolled in the program, likely contributed to the favorable employment outcomes reported among GAPS participants.

Nevertheless, the reported rate at which GAPS participants stayed employed is higher than available national averages for those leaving welfare. And early responses from participants and case managers have been encouraging.

“The reality is that most people on welfare want to work. They do want to be out there on their own,” said Victoria Mulvay, who oversees a GAPS program that serves Rankin, Braddock, and Turtle Creek – one of four operating in the county. “What GAPS has done is offer the support that some people have needed. By offering that support and giving them someone they can believe in and trust, they can do it and they are doing it.”

The GAPS study is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research of Princeton, NJ. The recent report is based on data gathered through site visits, focus groups, service use logs, and follow-up surveys with participants conducted 6 to 10 months after they entered the program. A final report, due next year, is expected to include findings based on a longer follow-up period.

Response To Reform

Job retention among welfare recipients emerged as a particularly critical issue in Pennsylvania after March 1997, when the Department of Public Welfare implemented Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The new rules included a five-year lifetime limit on benefits and required most recipients who received benefits for at least two years to work or participate in a work-related activity for 20 or more hours a week.

In response, GAPS was developed by The Pittsburgh Foundation, in collaboration with the Allegheny County Assistance Office of DPW to help those moving from welfare to work to keep their jobs and advance.

GAPS, implemented in September 1997, is expected to serve as many as 700 welfare recipients. The Pittsburgh Foundation contracted with four community-based organizations to manage programs: the Hill House Association, the Urban League of Pittsburgh, the Neighborhood Center Association, and Rankin Christian Center, through its family support partnership with Children’s Hospital.

Offering Support

Case management is central to the GAPS program. And participation is voluntary.

Through one-on-one contacts, case managers provide supportive counseling; advice about child care, transportation, workplace behavior, and other issues; and make referrals to other services.

Each of the four GAPS programs has at least two full-time case managers. According to the report, case managers contacted participants a little more than once a month, on the average. At the very least, these calls were to check on how GAPS participants were doing dealing with their recent employment.

The most common service case managers provide is supportive counseling on issues such as housing problems, morale and self esteem, goal setting and planning, and workplace behavior. Case managers also make referrals to other service providers, and give direct help in solving problems with benefits, such as Transitional Child Care and TANF.

GAPS participants, when surveyed, gave the program high marks for overall services, easy access to case managers, and for the ability of case managers to understand their problems.

Each of the four organizations managing GAPS programs operates a range of other services and programs for their communities. So, at least to some degree, GAPS participants may have access to services such as housing assistance, child care, mental health counseling, home budgeting and taxes, and family support.

Participants

Most GAPS participants entered the program with limited work histories. On average, they spent 29 months of their previous three years collecting welfare benefits.

Nearly all – 99% – were women, 51% of whom were between 20 and 29 years old. Seventy-two percent were African American and 25% were white. And most had children: 41% had one child; 29% had two children; 19% had three; 10% had four or more.

More than half said their families received welfare benefits when they were children and only half said they were raised in families with two parents present.

As a group, however, they were relatively well educated. For example, 58% of the GAPS participants had earned a high school diploma and 15% held an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. Only 8% had neither a GED nor a high school diploma.

(GAPS continued on Page 10)

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Child Care

The early findings of the GAPS study shed further light on the challenges people face when they move from welfare to work. Not surprisingly, child care loomed as a major concern among GAPS participants.

Child care can be a considerable expense to newly-hired workers, even those who receive subsidies. The average out-of-pocket expense for child care was found to be \$1.34 per hour per child among GAPS participants. At the same time, they were paid an average wage of less than \$7 an hour and most had more than one child.

Finding reliable child care is another challenge for new workers. Although child care arrangements made by GAPS participants did not frequently break down, 12% reported they had missed some time due to child care problems in the past month and 8% said they had missed an entire day. Most GAPS recipients relied on relatives or other types of informal care.

And child care was a problem for workers whose schedules called for hours during which child care is difficult to arrange. About one-third of those in GAPS said they had to work weekends, evenings, or nights – times when few child care services are offered.

Transportation

Overcoming transportation problems was another challenge for some of the new workers. One in three reported that transportation problems sometimes made working difficult; 13% said they missed time because of a transportation problem; and 6% said such problems led to them missing an entire day.

More than 60% of the participants relied on public transportation. That dependency led to some of the problems, particularly for those with jobs in suburban areas with fewer bus routes and those who worked weekends or night shifts.

Some reported lack of support at home. Three out of four GAPS participants said they had no other adult living at home, limiting their support network. And although 70% said their family was supportive of their efforts to find and hold onto a job, some faced negative pressure and hostility from family members. Said one, “My sister is jealous, and I have a brother that’s jealous. They always ask me could they have money all the time.”

Housing problems were also among the most discussed concerns among those trying to remain employed.

And case managers reported referring participants to a range of other services, including food banks, hous-

ing assistance programs, agencies that provided clothing and furniture, child care providers, training programs, tax professionals, and legal services.

Employment

Those in the GAPS program showed early signs of progress. About 79% were employed continuously throughout their first six months in GAPS. And only one in four were getting TANF benefits at the time of the study’s first follow-up survey.

The job retention rate of GAPS participants is higher than those that were typically seen among newly employed welfare recipients prior to TANF reforms. National data from the 1980s and early 1990s show that more than half of welfare recipients who found jobs were unemployed within six months.

Most GAPS participants held retail and service jobs. Two-thirds of the jobs were in the service sector, particularly in health care and social services, including child care. The next largest group held retail jobs in businesses such as restaurants, bars, supermarkets, and convenience stores.

Wages & Benefits

Unfortunately, the kinds of jobs most GAPS participants initially found offered relatively low wages and few fringe benefits. Few managed to land jobs in sectors that typically pay better wages, such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and public utilities.

The study found the average monthly income of a GAPS participant to be \$1,379. Such earnings would total \$16,440 for one year. The official 1997 poverty level for a family of three was \$12,802.

Most GAPS participants had health insurance, but not through their employer. At the time of the follow-up survey, two thirds of GAPS workers and 8 in 10 of their children were covered under public insurance programs, typically Medicaid. Findings suggest that the expense of co-payments may deter many workers from enrolling in company health plans.

Jobless Spells

Some in the program, however, had spells of unemployment during their first six months. About one in five did not have a job during that period.

Most of those who became unemployed reported they left their jobs voluntarily. Those who stayed unem-

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(GAPS continued from Page 10)

ployed usually reported pregnancy, health, or transportation problems as reasons for leaving their jobs.

Those who found new work were more likely to report dissatisfaction with salary, schedule, benefits, or other job-specific issues as reasons for leaving a previous position.

The GAPS participants most likely to find themselves temporarily unemployed were women who had a child after starting a job, and jobholders who had health problems.

Younger workers, too, were among those more likely to become unemployed. GAPS participants under 30 years old have a 22% chance of becoming unemployed during their first six months of work, compared to an 11% likelihood among those 30 years of age or older, according to the study. Case managers said younger workers typically have a more difficult time handling problems and work and have more problems organizing their finances and households.

Lessons

The early experiences of the four GAPS programs may offer useful lessons to policymakers and others involved in designing strategies for helping welfare recipients move from dependency to self-sufficiency. The report noted several, including the following observations:

- New workers value the counseling and support that a dedicated case manager can provide.
- Neighborhood-based programs may be useful to welfare agencies seeking to provide case management services to newly-employed welfare recipients.
- Although new workers were found to value supportive counseling, some need additional assistance to help them cope with emergencies or to help them afford work-related expenses.
- The reliability of child care arrangements is a critical issue for many new workers. Services that help improve the reliability of child care are particularly useful.
- Given that many of those moving from welfare to work initially hold low-paying jobs, a greater emphasis on job advancement may be a useful strategy for keeping them in the workforce. ■

(Regulatory Factors continued from Page 4)

- Child care centers that have caregivers with more formal education have lower ratings of potential danger, such as with children climbing on furniture.
- Child care directors with more experience and education may be more likely to monitor staff, which promotes children’s safety.
- Caregivers with more education interact more sensitively and positively with children, which may reduce the number of injuries in child care.
- Caregivers with more education have children who are more compliant and socially competent.
- Caregivers with more education are more likely to continue in child care employment, which promotes attachment and social development.
- Caregivers with a college education tend to engage children in interactions that expand upon and extend children’s ongoing activities and promote the development of verbal skills, which may improve children’s readiness for school.

Staff In-Service Training

Conclusion: *Staff should be trained in health and safety procedures as well as in behaviors that promote social and cognitive development, because staff training, when monitored, leads to improved physical and mental health, safety, and cognitive development.*

More specifically:

- Staff training programs, particularly those involving hand-washing procedures, reduce disease rates.
- The benefits of staff training in health procedures are more likely to benefit children when staff behavior is monitored by supervisors following the training.
- Staff training programs reduce the number of accidental injuries in child care centers.
- Staff training improves caregiving behavior and children’s social competence.
- Staff training improves caregiving stimulating behaviors, which enhance cognitive development in children.

FOR THE FULL BRIEFING PAPER, Regulatory Factors in Early Childhood, contact the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, (412) 624-5527, or visit the OCD website on the Internet (www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb) and download the briefing paper, which can be found at <http://www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/policy21.htm>. ■

Coming Events . . .

Author Hale To Speak At PAEYC Conference

Dr. Janice Hale, author of two books on African American children, is scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) in October.

The conference will be held Oct. 23 from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, downtown Pittsburgh.

Dr. Hale, Professor of Early Childhood Education at Wayne State University, will discuss the importance of roots and cultural experiences on the development and educational success of African American children. Dr. Hale explores the effects of culture on the African American child's intellectual development in two of her books, *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles* and *Unbank the Fire: Visions for the Education of African American Children*.

Her address will be followed by a discussion of issues and curricular reforms that would enable African American children to develop their intelligence, pursue their strengths, and succeed in school and in the workplace.

The conference offers more than 70 professional development workshops, including a continued dialogue with Dr. Hale.

Early childhood professionals are welcome to attend. KURC and DPW offer training credits for the conference.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Barbara Ginsberg, Conference Chairperson, (412) 681-6685; or e-mail: sg3@vms.cis.pitt.edu. ■

Children's Conference To Be Held In October

National and state experts will offer updates on child health, child care, welfare reform, family support, and other issues important to Pennsylvania's three million children at the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children's annual statewide conference. The conference, *Forging Partnerships for Children*, is scheduled for Oct. 4 and 5 at the Harrisburg Hilton and Towers.

Featured speakers include:

- Sanford A. Newman, President, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, addressing *The Crime Fighters' Consensus: To Fight Crime, Invest in Kids*.
- J. Lawrence Aber, PhD Director, National Center for Children in Poverty, and Associate Professor of Public Health, Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, addressing *New Opportunities to Reduce Child Poverty*.
- Joan L. Benso, Exec. Director, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, addressing *The State of the Child in Pennsylvania: How Are Our Children Faring?*

The four chairs of the Pennsylvania House and Senate Aging and Youth committees are scheduled to attend to address current children's issues.

Presenters include the state Department of Public Welfare, the Governor's Community Partnership for Safe Children, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and other organizations.

Thirty-two workshops are offered on topics including working with the media, advocating to lawmakers, family support systems, school violence, subsidized child care, Fatherhood Initiative efforts, welfare reform, CHIP and Medical Assistance outreach, juvenile justice, academic standards, using the Internet for advocacy, and parent organizing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION or to register, contact Teri Weldin, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Special Projects Coordinator, 1-800-257-2030, or e-mail: tweldin@papartnerships.org. ■

Developments

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