



Children's Advocacy Institute

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A WELFARE REFORM QUIZ

The United States has enacted welfare reform provisions intended to move families once dependent upon Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) into work and self-sufficiency. The new program, called Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), ends the entitlement of impoverished children to a safety net, cuts food stamps, bars most newly arriving legal immigrants from aid, and reduces or terminates benefits for children if their parents are unable to find jobs after a defined period of welfare assistance.

Critics of these reforms contend that the changes are driven by inaccuracies about recipients --- helped by a daytime talk show parade of lurid confessors and by political demagogues. The popular stereotype is a system gone awry, with minority (mostly African-American) women becoming impregnated as unwed teens, going on the dole, and raising a new generation of gang-banger males and waiting-to-birth females.

Curious about how much is fact and how much fiction about welfare recipients and the new reforms, I reviewed the most recent data from the state Department of Social Services and other reliable sources, and present the following quiz to test whether you have become a victim of stereotypes.

The average age of a California TANF mother is: (A) 17; (B) 31; (C) 26; (D) 19.

The percentage of California TANF mothers who are unwed and under 19 years old is: (A) 61%; (B) 2%; (C) 21%; (D) 18%.

One ethnic group has 60% of all teen births, a second group has 23%, and a third 11%. (Hint: Their relative ranking is the same for overall families on TANF.) The group with 60% is: (A) African-American; (B) Asian; (C) Caucasian; (D) Latina.

The ethnic group with 11% of all teen births is: (A) Asian; (B) White; (C) Latina; (D) African-American.

The average age of a male impregnating an unwed teen is: (A) The same as the female; (B) 0 to 3 years older; (C) More than six years older; (D) From 3 to 5 years older.

In 1973, 84% of children living in families below the federal poverty line received TANF (AFDC) support. In 1996, that percent was: (A) 68%; (B) 55%; (C) 98%; (D) 88%.

The TANF account --- before welfare reform --- made up what percentage of the federal budget? (A) 26%; (B) 1.5%; (C) 6.8%; (D) 16.5%.

In 1980, a three-person family received a maximum \$960 per month in total TANF (AFDC) support in 1997 dollars; the current maximum monthly TANF grant for the same family (before welfare reform) is: (A) \$1,100; (B) \$960; (C) \$690; (D) \$565.

Can a welfare family enrich itself by having additional children? Before welfare reform's prohibition on any increase, each additional child after the first added this amount per month: (A) \$600-640; (B) \$425-450; (C) \$90-110; (D) \$320-360.

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Of the 2.4 million absent biological fathers being tracked by California agencies, the total monthly child support paid for each of the 4.5 million children they have fathered averages: (A) \$160; (B) \$324; (C) \$17; (D) \$95.

The median family income of a single-mother household with more than one child under six years of age is: (A) \$7,000; (B) \$29,000; (C) \$18,000; (D) \$2,000.

The median family income of a married couple with the same number of children as above is: (A) \$18,000; (B) \$32,000; (C) \$42,000; (D) \$26,000.

The unwed birth rate (all ages and incomes) in California is approximately: (A) 10%; (B) 15%; (C) 22%; (D) 32%.

The unwed birth rate among African-Americans (all ages and incomes) is approximately: (A) 15%; (B) 22%; (C) 32%; (D) 60%.

Are the poor of other states moving to California for welfare? The percentage of families receiving TANF and in California less than 12 months is: (A) 35%; (B) 18%; (C) 6%; (D) 1%.

Under welfare reform, almost 700,000 TANF parents with 1.4 million children must find work or suffer TANF cuts. If these parents get their share of available jobs competing with others who are looking for work, in one year the number of TANF children with still-unemployed parents will be: (A) 1 million; (B) 80,000; (C) 340,000; (D) 480,000.

Legal immigrants arriving in California after 1996 who are not refugees number over 50,000 children annually. Legal immigrant families which fall upon hard times will be eligible under welfare reform during their first five years for: (A) TANF; (B) Non-emergency Medi-Cal (including preventive services); (C) Food Stamps; (D) None of the above.

California general fund spending (mostly for children) in 1989 was 6.7% of personal income. The same tax burden in 1997 would produce: (A) \$1 billion less than budgeted for 1997-98; (B) the same amount now budgeted; (C) \$8 billion more than budgeted for 1997-98; (D) \$3 billion more than budgeted for 1997-98.

Answers:

(1)B; (2)B; (3)D; (4)D; (5)D; (6)A; (7)B; (8)D; (9)C; (10)C; (11)A; (12)C; (13)D; (14)D; (15)D; (16) A; (17) D; (18)C. Sources and citations available upon request.

Ratings:

16 or more correct --- Well-informed; 12-15 correct --- Some accurate knowledge; 7-11 correct --- Substantially misinformed; 0-6 correct --- A politician's dream.

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