

HJR

36

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 4.26/93

FURTHER: JUDICIARY
FINANCE

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: 1/19/94

HES Committee considered CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36(HES)

Urging the federal Department of Health and Human Services to repeal the "100-hour rule" relating to employment of certain persons receiving AFDC and to replace it with a regulation that will serve as an incentive for AFDC recipients to accept employment of more than 100 hours a month.

and recommends:

- replace with _____ CS _____ ()
- or adopt previous _____ CS _____ ()
- attaches amendment(s)

- same title
- new title
- technical title change (HB only)

- adopts _____ Letter of Intent
- further referral to the _____

- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations

NEW FISCAL NOTES

Department	Date	Zero	Fiscal
HSS	1/18/94	✓	

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTES

Department	Date	Zero	Fiscal

Appropriation No Fiscal Note

DO PASS:

Duke Miller
Jim Duncan
Al Ellis
Bob Sharp
Judith E. Ballo
Steven A. Lemmon

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Steve Klein Do Pass
 Chair: Signature and Recommendation

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1994 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Cs;
BILL NO. HJR 36 (HES)

Revision Date: _____ Dept. Affected: Health and Social Services
 Title: A Resolution urging the federal Department of Health and Human Services to repeal the "100-hour rule" BRU: Assistance Payments
 Component: AFDC
 Sponsor: Brice, et al
 Requestor: _____ COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 0220

Expenditures/Revenues:

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00
PERSONAL SERVICES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TRAVEL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CONTRACTUAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SUPPLIES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EQUIPMENT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MISCELLANEOUS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE	0	0	0	0	0	0
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FUNDING:

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1003 GF Match	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1004 GF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1006 GF/MHTIA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year (FY94) impact: NONE

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HJR 36 calls for repeal of the federal AFDC "100-hour rule" for AFDC Unemployed Parent families. This resolution has no direct fiscal impact on AFDC program costs. Neither the effective date of any change in federal policy that might result from this resolution nor the impact of an alternate federal definition of unemployment can be predicted.

Prepared by: Jan L. Hansen, Director
 Division: Division of Public Assistance
 Approved by Commissioner: Margaret R. Lowe, M.Ed., Ed.S.
 Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

Phone: 465-2680
 Date: 1/18/94
 Date: 1-18-94

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Representative Tom Brice

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE TOM BRICE Sponsor Statement for HJR 36

The federal Department of Health and Human Services has developed and implemented regulations relating to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Unemployed Parent Program that set out the number of hours a grant recipient can work and maintain eligibility for the program. That threshold is set at 100 hours per month. If a job that exceeds 100 hours per month is accepted by the unemployed parent, that family becomes ineligible for AFDC and Medicaid even if employment earnings are less than the amount of the AFDC grant.

This rule in effect encourages dependency on the AFDC program and discourages people who want to work from accepting full time employment. Many low income families do not accept jobs because those jobs will not support the family or have no health benefits. Therefore, many families stay on the AFDC program in order to meet basic living needs. In addition to the issue of fostering dependency, it means that the state is incurring increased costs to the program.

Repealing the 100 hour rule will allow those families to accept employment that exceeds 100 hours per month that may partially support them and reduce the amount of aid they receive. This will promote self sufficiency and save state dollars at the same time.

Additionally, President Clinton's federal welfare reform working group has been meeting to formulate recommendations that will be forwarded to the administration for inclusion in a welfare reform package later this year. Preliminary indications suggest that the repeal of the 100 hour rule will be one of those recommendations. It is important that we add our voice of support for this element of welfare reform.

In order to seriously consider responsible welfare reform, we must encourage the development of laws and regulations that help rather than hinder families to become more self sufficient.



POSITION PAPER

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION No. 36

A Resolution urging the federal Department of Health and Human Services to repeal the "100-hour rule" relating to employment of certain persons receiving AFDC and to replace it with a regulation that will serve as an incentive for AFDC recipients to accept part-time employment.

Discussion:

HJR 36 calls for repeal of the AFDC "100-hour rule" for AFDC Unemployed Parent families. The Department of Health and Social Services supports this resolution. We have found that the 100-hour rule, rather than promoting self-sufficiency, contributes to AFDC dependency for all of the reasons stated in HJR 36. Both the Department and Governor Hickel have recently issued position papers calling for repeal of the 100-hour rule along with enactment of other federal welfare reform measures.

Federal statute requires the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a regulatory definition of unemployment for purposes of determining eligibility for two-parent AFDC families where the parents do not have enough income to support themselves and their children. The 100-hour rule provides that AFDC eligibility does not exist for such a family if the parent with the most substantial earnings history is working 100 hours or more per month, regardless of the amount of earnings.

This regulation, while designed to draw a clear line of distinction between the unemployed and the underemployed, actually has the result of discouraging AFDC parents from accepting full-time, low-paid jobs that, while they would not produce enough earnings to support the family at the AFDC standard of need, would reduce the amount of their AFDC benefits and could eventually lead to self-sufficiency. Such jobs are often the only jobs available to AFDC parents, and we want to encourage them to accept any employment that is available to them. The 100-hour rule is inimical to the Department's goal of encouraging work and supporting the self-sufficiency of welfare recipients.

Position Paper
HJR 36
Page 2

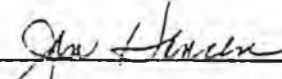
Proposed Amendments:

Page 2, lines 9 and 10 of the bill request that the regulation be revised to "encourage AFDC recipients to accept part-time employment." That is essentially what the existing rule already does, and the crux of the problem. We propose that this language be changed to "encourage AFDC recipients to accept employment regardless of the number of hours worked, remaining eligible for AFDC benefits so long as the amount of their income does not exceed the state's standard of need."

To be consistent with this change in text, it is also necessary to strike the word "part-time" from the bill title.

Recommendation:


The Department of Health and Social Services supports HJR 36 and recommends that it be adopted with the proposed amendments.



Jan L. Hansen, Director
Division of Public Assistance
Department of Health and
Social Services

4/3/93

Date



Theodore A. Mala, MD, MPH
Commissioner
Department of Health and
Social Services

4/2/93

Date

STATE OF ALASKA

POSITION PAPER

March 8, 1993

FEDERAL POLICY CHANGES NEEDED FOR STATE WELFARE REFORM

The State of Alaska needs changes in federal policy to enable it to move forward with initiatives to reduce welfare dependency and promote the self-sufficiency of welfare recipients. We propose changes in the following policy areas.

- AFDC Waiver Authority: Provide more options to states. Allow statewide waivers without demonstration project methodology.
- AFDC Unemployed Parents: Repeal the "100-hour rule."
- AFDC Eligibility Policy: Expand work incentives; allow options for the vehicle value limit.
- JOBS Program Policy: Drop unrealistic requirements and recognize the value of paid work.

Re-allocate lapsed federal JOBS funds to states that have fully matched 100% of federal CAP.

Eliminate "new job" requirement for Work Supplementation.
- Work Experience: Provide federal matching funds for work experience programs for non-JOBS AFDC recipients.
- Health Care: Expand Transitional Medicaid coverage for AFDC recipients who go to work.

Background

The State of Alaska has found that federal policies severely limit its ability to try new approaches in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program for AFDC recipients. Many Alaskans have expressed a growing sense of frustration as it has become clear that the federal government must act before we can hope to make real, positive changes in our AFDC program.

Along with many other states, Alaska has experienced a rapid rise in its AFDC caseload over the past four years, with serious impact on the state budget. Alaska's caseload grew by 49.3 percent between July 1989 and September 1992 and is projected to continue to grow by at least 5 percent per year.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services has been working to identify the causes of welfare dependency and developing measures to curb the growth of the AFDC program. The January 1993 issue of Alaska Economic Trends includes an article that summarizes the Department's study of welfare dependency and welfare restructuring measures. The study revealed that federal requirements stand in the way of state initiatives to reduce welfare dependency. Many of the most eloquent critics of existing federal policies are themselves AFDC recipients.

Proposed Federal Changes

AFDC Waiver Authority

Provide Options to States: The states' policy options are too limited. Policy waivers are difficult to obtain, expensive to operate, and inequitable in their application. Section 1115 of the Social Security Act establishes the only authority for waiver of federal AFDC policies. The waiver requirements are a major obstacle to welfare reform. The cost of designing and operating the demonstration projects required for waiver approval is prohibitive for small states like Alaska. A project of any significant size requires major modifications to electronic data processing systems and additional staff to design, monitor, and operate the project in compliance with the rigid federal guidelines. Some of the federal statutes and regulations governing AFDC and JOBS make so little sense that there is no further need for experimentation to test alternatives.

Allow Essential Waivers without Demonstration Project Methodology: The demonstration project requirement to impose different eligibility rules on experimental and control groups raises the issue of inequitable treatment of similarly situated people and makes it impossible to apply innovative rules to the state's entire AFDC caseload. Much has been written in the popular press about the innovations advanced by some of the larger states like Wisconsin, New Jersey, Maryland and California. These stories tend to ignore the fact that the alternative rules being tested apply only to a selected number of individuals.

The general perception of the ability of the states to restructure their welfare programs stands in sharp contrast to the reality of applying waivers under the current requirements. Waivers should be granted to allow statewide changes without requiring a control group.

AFDC Unemployed Parents

Repeal the 100-hour Rule: The limit on the number of hours that AFDC parents in intact families may work encourages dependency and wastes state and federal program dollars. The "100-hour rule" for AFDC Unemployed Parent cases, which denies benefits to families where a parent works more than 100 hours per month, actually fosters AFDC dependency and drives up the cost of the program. Low-income families frequently choose not to accept jobs that are available to them because they can't afford to take them. Families that might eventually work themselves off welfare stay on, hoping for a job that will pay enough to support them, and give up a source of income that would partially support them and reduce the cost of their AFDC benefits. The 100-hour rule must be repealed.

AFDC Eligibility Policy

Expand Work Incentives: Financial incentives for welfare recipients to work are inadequate. The statutory policy on treatment of earned income provides little real incentive for AFDC parents to work. States must be given the authority to disregard substantially larger amounts of working recipients' income so they will have real incentives to get jobs and keep working.

Allow Options for the Vehicle Value Limit: The regulatory restriction on the value of the family automobile keeps people at home when they could be working or training for work. It doesn't allow potential workers to have the reliable transportation they need to get training, search for work, get children to child care, or commute to available jobs. Federal policy must be changed to empower the states to set much higher limits on the value of vehicles than the \$1500 allowed under existing regulations.

JOBS

Drop Unrealistic Requirements: Participation quotas for the JOBS program for AFDC recipients are unrealistic and do not recognize work itself as a legitimate training activity.

As the American Public Welfare Association pointed out in a recently adopted resolution, the statutory requirement to have 40 percent of AFDC Unemployed Parent families participate in individual work experience beginning in fiscal year 1994 is unrealistic when you consider the cap on federal JOBS funding, the general lack of job skills of most recipients, and the high cost of developing sites and operating and monitoring the program.

Recognize Paid Work: The 40 percent requirement, combined with the other JOBS program participation quotas, sets the states up for failure and loss of federal funding.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Department of Health and Human Services refuses to recognize unsubsidized employment as a legitimate work experience for unemployed parents. Paid employment -a real job- is the best possible work experience and must be the primary aim of the JOBS program. The JOBS participation quotas must be adjusted to reflect what can reasonably be accomplished with the amount of funding available.

Reallocate Lapsed JOBS Funds to States Who Use Cap: The authorization for Title IV-F JOBS funds is inadequate to carry out federal mandates for JOBS. Some states have fully expended their capped allocation and some states have lapsed JOBS funds by failing to appropriate adequate state match. The federal government should re-allocate lapsed JOBS funds to states that utilize their full cap and are making a welfare-to-work commitment with adequate state match. Alaska could be entitled to an additional \$1,000,000 for its JOBS program if a reallocation policy were in place.

Eliminate "New Job" Requirement for Work Supplementation: There is welfare dependency-breaking value in JOBS Work Supplementation (welfare recipients working for a pay check from an employer, partially funded by diversion of the welfare grant.) The federal requirement that Work Supplementation job placements be made only in jobs which did not previously exist severely restricts the use by public assistance agencies of the Work Supplementation program. JOBS program policy must be changed to allow Work Supplementation placements in any job slot available in the employment market.

Work Experience for non-JOBS AFDC Recipients

Restore Federal Funding for Title IV-A Work Experience: The Family Support Act of 1988 repealed federal funding and authority for mandatory work experience activities for AFDC recipients who are not enrolled in JOBS. Comprehensive welfare reform requires federal support of work experience for AFDC clients who, because of limited funding, are not served by the JOBS program. An impetus to work must be placed on all welfare recipients, not just those enrolled in JOBS. Authority and funding for non-JOBS AFDC work experience must be restored.

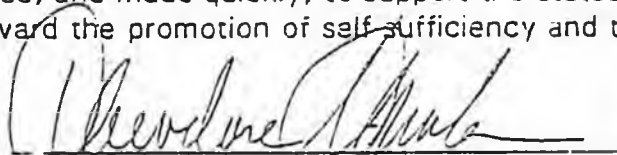
Health Care

Expand Transitional Medicaid: Under the current rules, the maximum Transitional Medicaid coverage is twelve months for people who lose eligibility for AFDC due to increases in earned income. It has been widely acknowledged that access to health care is one of the major reasons people stay on welfare. The twelve-month coverage limitation is a barrier to long term employment for people entering the labor force, particularly at the lower wage levels. The twelve-month limitation must be supplemented by an extension of coverage at state option, based either on length of employment, total income of the household, or both.

Conclusion

Regulatory and statutory provisions which promote dependency and hinder the states' efforts must be repealed. The federal government must move away from the demonstration project concept toward a statutory expansion of the states' policy options. The states also need a simple, comprehensive administrative process for waiver of statutory and regulatory requirements. The states are well motivated to control costs while assuring that their citizens are protected from poverty. States are not going to adopt changes that do not promise to yield results.

These federal policy changes must be made, and made quickly, to support the states in their desire to affect positive changes toward the promotion of self-sufficiency and the reduction of welfare costs.



Theodore A. Mala, MD, MPH
Commissioner
Department of Health & Social Services

For more information, contact:

Jan L. Hansen, Director
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P.O. Box 110640
Juneau, AK 99811-0640

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Welfare in Alaska—Help or Hindrance to Self-Sufficiency?

by Cristina Klein

There is a simple but revealing tale set in Japan which explores the nature of truth. In this story, the tale of Rashomon, four individuals witness the same event—a death on the road which they are traveling. Later, when these witnesses recount what they have seen to the police, four vastly different stories emerge. Was it a suicide or murder? If murder, by whom?

Beliefs about welfare and how it should work are like the contrasting "truths" in the tale of Rashomon.

A working person who has never applied for welfare may see the system as an unfair dole to people too lazy to work. Someone without skills and with little work experience, newly separated, with two young children, may see welfare as her salvation, keeping her family off the streets. An eligibility technician in a welfare office with a growing caseload may see welfare as a frustrating complex of regulations to wade through while attempting to help clients. And in the various states, policy makers express their views about welfare in poli-

Cristina Klein is a Project Coordinator with the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services. She has previously worked as a Labor Economist for DOL/Research and Analysis, and as a writer, social worker, business owner and Peace Corps Volunteer. Her article, "Is There a Nurse in the House?" appeared in the December 1989 *Alaska Economic Trends*.

Welfare in Alaska

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is known simply as welfare. Some facts about welfare in Alaska:

- The AFDC program provides support to needy children. Grants are given to families because this is the most efficient way to deliver financial aid.
- The AFDC-Basic program helps low income families deprived of one or both parents. AFDC-Unemployed Parent (UP) provides cash assistance to families with both parents in the home.
- AFDC participation makes members of households eligible for Medicaid and energy assistance.
- In 1993, a household comprised of a mother and two children receives \$950 a month or 79% of the federal poverty level for Alaska.
- \$814 was the average AFDC payment in August 1992.
- Each month in 1992, about 11,000 families in Alaska received AFDC assistance. Family members included about 12,000 adults and about 20,600 children, a total of about 32,600 individuals.
- Between FY 84 and FY 91, roughly 67% of AFDC families received AFDC for less than two years.
- In FY91, 45% of all AFDC families served had only one child. Only 9% of AFDC families had more than three children.
- Child support payments for AFDC families reimburse state and federal AFDC programs and partially fund the Alaska Department of Revenue's Child Support Enforcement Division. AFDC clients are allowed the first \$50 of child support payments as a collection incentive.
- The federal government pays 50% of the Alaska AFDC program costs for both clients' benefits and for program administration.
- The federal government requires states to provide education, employment and training services to AFDC recipients. Alaska provides these services through the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program.
- AFDC-UP was federally mandated for all states by October 1, 1990. Alaska began including two parent households in AFDC on October 1, 1990.

cies which range from the innovative to the punitive.

Self-Sufficiency project seeks answers

The Alaska AFDC Self-Sufficiency Project set out in May of 1992 to find out about welfare. Does it create a group of dependent people with no incentive to work? Is the system a nightmare of regulations and forms? How can the welfare system help recipients get jobs and become independent of the system? And how can the system reduce or maintain costs in a time of growing caseloads—a problem fit for a sage to ponder.

The project surveyed AFDC clients and staff and looked at the innovative programs which other states are undertaking to find new ways to promote self-sufficiency.

Table 1 gives the number of AFDC clients and program costs by district in August, 1992. Table 2 shows AFDC recipients' length of stay in the program.

Poverty is growing in Alaska and the U.S.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census annual poverty report, *Poverty in the United States: 1991*, the number of poor is at its highest level since anti-poverty programs began in the mid-1960s. The number of Americans living below the poverty line in 1991 was 35.7 million, or 1 in every 7 Americans. In 1991, 35.4 million Americans (14.1%) had no medical insurance.

One of the primary reasons given for the national increase in poverty is the increasing number of people in low wage jobs which do not provide medical benefits. In the 1960s and 1970s, the earnings of a full-time, year-round worker in a minimum wage job typically exceeded the poverty level for a family of three. In the 1980s, that changed.

Nationally, the minimum wage for a full time worker would have to be raised to \$5.40 to equal the poverty level for a family of three. In Alaska, the minimum wage would have to be raised to \$7.20 for a family of three in order to equal the poverty level (\$1,205) set for that family size by the federal government. At the current minimum wage level of \$4.75 in Alaska, a wage earner with two dependents would be earning just 66% of the poverty level.

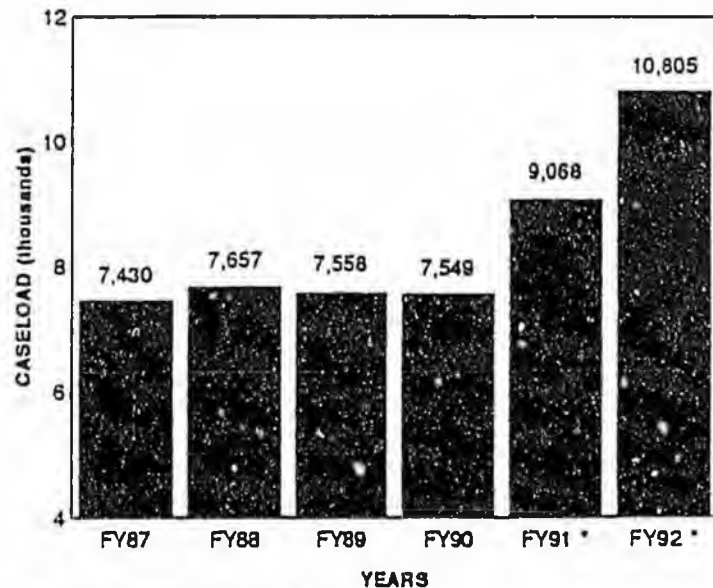
Length of Stay Summary
January 1, 1992

Length of Time on AFDC	# of Clients	Percentage
1-12 Months	2,800	28.9
13-24 Months	1,997	20.6
25-36 Months	1,183	12.2
37-60 Months	1,716	17.7
Greater than 60 Months	2,007	20.7
Total	9,703	

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Figure • 1

AFDC Program Average Caseload in Alaska
by Fiscal Year—1987 to 1992



*AFDC-UP (two parent) added in October 1990.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

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Table 1

AFDC Caseload and Expenditures August 1992

	AFDC-Basic Cases	AFDC-UP Cases	AFDC Total Cases	AFDC Avg. Expenditure	AFDC Total Expenditure	
<i>*SC/South Central includes Kodiak, Dillingham, Nome, Kotzebue and Aleutian Chain.</i>	Anchorage	4,108	458	4,566	5826	\$3,772,077
	Fairbanks	1,061	151	1,212	793	961,518
	Wasilla	987	232	1,219	838	1,021,887
<i>**NR/Northern Region includes Fairbanks, Ft. Yukon and surrounding area.</i>	Southwest Region	623	315	938	808	757,641
	Kenai	640	111	751	800	601,133
	Juneau	471	66	537	754	404,834
<i>Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.</i>	South Central Field*	410	68	478	781	373,366
	Ketchikan	432	48	480	809	288,428
	Northern Region Field**	312	78	390	850	331,477
	Nome	205	55	260	833	216,495
	Kotzebue	184	52	236	762	179,928
	Sitka	86	11	97	829	80,384
	Total	9,519	1,645	11,164	5814	\$9,089,168

AFDC Self-Sufficiency Project

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services/Division of Public Assistance is conducting the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Self-Sufficiency Project, a one year study of strategies for helping AFDC clients become self-sufficient. The project is also looking at ways to reduce (or) contain AFDC program costs.

The study is composed of:

- 1) A survey of AFDC clients' and staff's perceptions of barriers to self-sufficiency. Forty AFDC clients were interviewed in person, another forty were interviewed by phone, and over 1,000 randomly selected clients were mailed an extensive questionnaire. This statistically valid survey focused on barriers to employment, ideas for changing the welfare system, and the kind of help clients need to get jobs and move off welfare.

AFDC clients returned 48% (485) of the mailed questionnaires.

All eligibility technicians, JOBS staff and Native JOBS staff were mailed questionnaires with questions about clients' barriers to self-sufficiency. About 50% (181 questionnaires) were returned.

- 2) Focus group meetings: The project coordinator held eleven focus group meetings on the barriers to self-sufficiency. Meetings were held with AFDC clients and staff, JOBS clients and staff, and Native JOBS clients and staff. Meetings were held in Juneau and Anchorage. About 175 people attended these meetings.
- 3) An analysis of the federal process (called a Section 1115 Waiver) which Alaska would have to undertake in order to run a demonstration project exempt from the usual federal provisions governing the AFDC program.
- 4) An analysis of the AFDC waiver demonstrations proposed or carried on by other states.
- 5) A review of rural job possibilities for AFDC clients that might be developed with other agencies.

The Self-Sufficiency Project will produce an interim report in early 1993.

Table • 2

Length of Stay Summary
January 1, 1992

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Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Table 1 gives the number of AFDC clients and program costs by district in August, 1992. Table 2 shows AFDC recipients' length of stay in the program.

Poverty is growing in Alaska and the U.S.

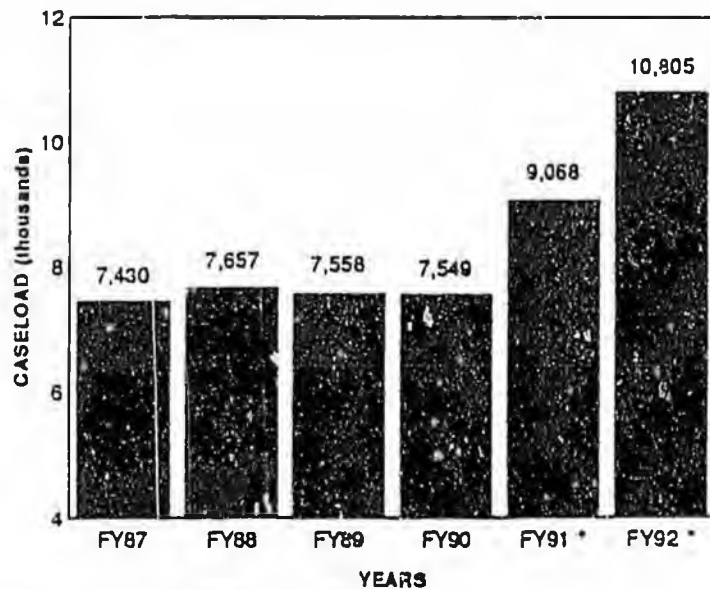
According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census annual poverty report, *Poverty in the United States: 1991*, the number of poor is at its highest level since anti-poverty programs began in the mid-1960s. The number of Americans living below the poverty line in 1991 was 35.7 million, or 1 in every 7 Americans. In 1991, 35.4 million Americans (14.1%) had no medical insurance.

One of the primary reasons given for the national increase in poverty is the increasing number of people in low wage jobs which do not provide medical benefits. In the 1960s and 1970s, the earnings of a full-time, year-round worker in a minimum wage job typically exceeded the poverty level for a family of three. In the 1980s, that changed.

Nationally, the minimum wage for a full time worker would have to be raised to \$5.40 to equal the poverty level for a family of three. In Alaska, the minimum wage would have to be raised to \$7.20 for a family of three in order to equal the poverty level (\$1,205) set for that family size by the federal government. At the current minimum wage level of \$4.75 in Alaska, a wage earner with two dependents would be earning just 66% of the poverty level.

Figure • 1

AFDC Program Average Caseload in Alaska
by Fiscal Year—1987 to 1992



*AFDC-UP (no parent) added in October 1990.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Table • 3

**AFDC-UP in Alaska and Western States
(As a % of total AFDC)**

State	Recipients				Families			
	AFDC-UP	% of Total	Basic	% of Total	UP	% of Total	Basic	% of Total
Alaska	6,645	22.2	23,245	78.8	1,449	14.3	8,710	85.7
California	480,611	21.3	1,775,530	78.7	114,213	14.5	647,097	85.5
Oregon	15,884	13.1	100,897	86.4	3,826	9.2	37,708	90.8
Washington	58,469	21.7	210,666	78.3	13,827	14.6	80,974	85.4

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

In 1991, 11.8% of Alaskans were living below the poverty line. About 5% of Alaskans, or less than half of those living below the poverty line, were recipients of AFDC.¹

due to both the growth of Alaska's population and to the national recession. The growth in Alaska's caseloads correlates closely with a national trend of increasing caseloads.

¹AFDC-UP added in October, 1990.

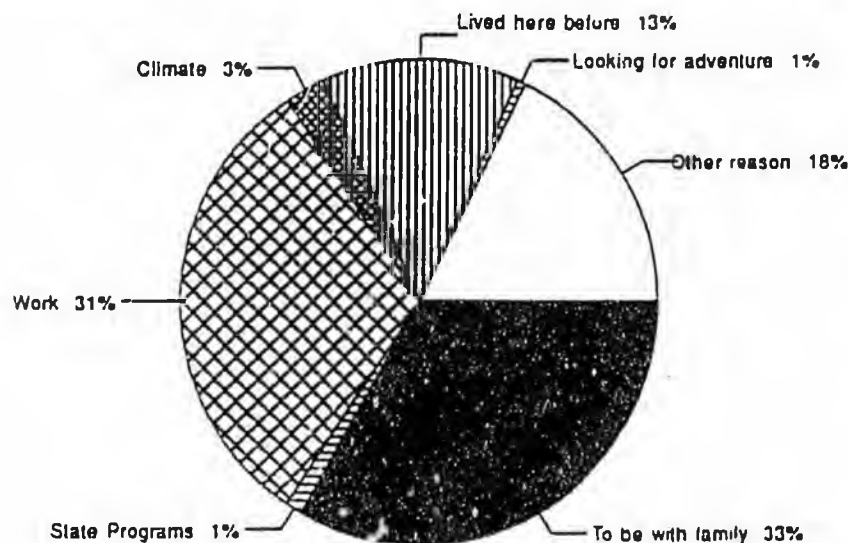
AFDC caseloads on the rise

Alaska is experiencing a phenomenon common to most other states. AFDC caseloads have been growing dramatically since 1990. This increase is

Another significant reason for the increase in caseloads has been the federally mandated addition of two parent households (AFDC-UP) in October, 1990. This mandate was contained in the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988, a major package of federal welfare reform legislation designed to promote family self-sufficiency. About half the states were providing coverage to two-parent families before the mandate of the Family Support Act in 1988.

Figure • 2

**Primary Reason for Coming to Alaska
Field Operations Client Survey**



Note: Although 13% gave "lived here before" as primary reason, 24% of total respondents had actually lived in Alaska before.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Alaska's addition of AFDC-Unemployed Parent (UP) households in October, 1990, accounted for over half the increase in the state's caseloads in 1991-92. Average AFDC caseloads grew by 43% from the 1989 level to the 1992 average caseload level. AFDC caseloads in virtually every other state grew during this period. (Nationally, there were 4,973,200 families receiving AFDC in June, 1992.)

Sustained caseload increases correlate closely with periods of economic downturn in Alaska. Following the boom of the oil pipeline construction which ended in 1976, the Alaskan economy went into a recession. AFDC caseloads at this time (1977-80) increased dramatically. From 1981 until 1984, AFDC caseloads decreased. When oil revenues fell in 1985, AFDC caseloads again increased sharply until 1988. Caseloads then leveled off and decreased in 1989.

Figure 1 shows the average caseload growth of AFDC in Alaska from 1987 through 1992. Table 3 shows that AFDC-UP makes up about the same percent of AFDC costs for Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California.

Are people coming to Alaska to collect welfare?

Two studies say no.

Two recent surveys have been conducted by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services/ Division of Public Assistance. The first is an anonymous questionnaire given to new applicants for AFDC to find out if AFDC applicants are coming to Alaska to collect benefits.

This survey shows that being with family, previous residence in Alaska and work are the primary reasons new applicants give for coming to Alaska. Figure 2 gives the results of the field survey.

The second confidential questionnaire was given to over 1,000 clients through the AFDC Self-Sufficiency Project in July, 1992. The primary reasons given for coming to Alaska were that recipients used to live here, that their families live in Alaska, that the quality of life in Alaska is better than in other places, and that work is abundant in the state. Figure 3 shows the results for both rural and urban clients.

Does Alaska pay too much to welfare clients?

That depends on who you ask. Ask a typical client, a mother with two children, who is trying to pay rent and expenses on \$950 a month, and surely the answer will be no. Ask a government employee whose job provides the security of a reasonable wage, excellent medical coverage, and a pension plan. The answer may well be yes.

But the reality which continues to emerge from the Self-Sufficiency Project study is not that welfare pays too much. Rather, it is that low paid jobs simply do not pay enough for a family to live on. And this situation is exacerbated by the lack of medical coverage.

Alaska pays about 79% of the federally determined poverty level to a typical AFDC family of three. Approximately 50% of the funds for grants to recipients and for administration of the AFDC

program is paid by the federal government. About 60% of these recipients also receive food stamp assistance, and about a third of AFDC families receive housing assistance.

Figure 4 compares the federal poverty level for Alaska with AFDC grants in the state in 1993. Figure 5 compares maximum AFDC benefits for a family of three in the ten states which pay the highest AFDC grants. Table 4 gives the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association (ACCRA) Cost of Living Index.

Does welfare discourage work?

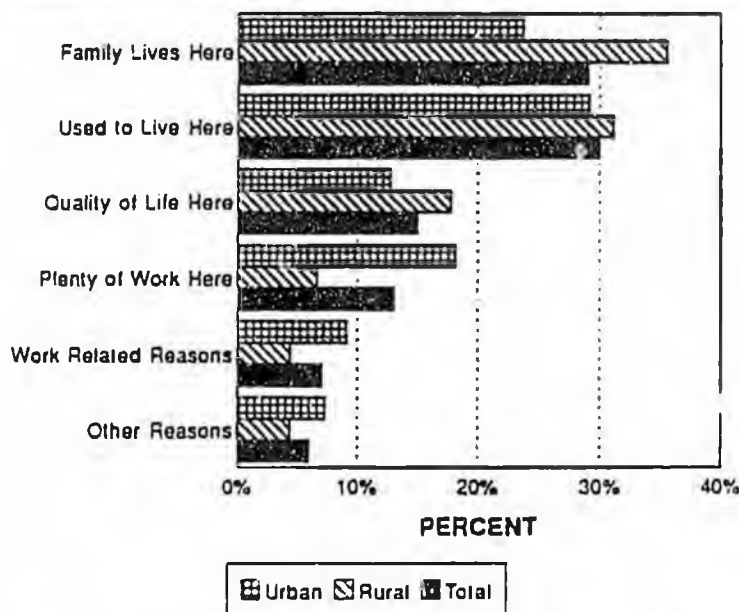
In some ways it does.

Some federal regulations are an albatross around the state's neck because they discourage work. These regulations are:

- ✓ The 100-hour rule. This rule limits an unemployed parent in a two parent (UP) household to 100 hours of work a month in order to remain eligible for AFDC. If the parent starts working full time, he or she becomes ineligible for AFDC and Medicaid even if she or he earns less than the AFDC grant.

Figure 3

Primary Reason for Moving to Alaska Client Survey/Self-Sufficiency Project



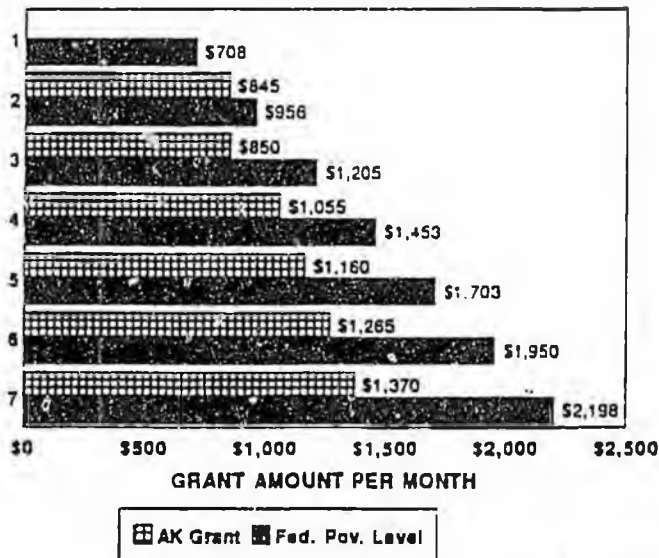
Note: Based on 485 client responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance Self-Sufficiency Project.

Figure • 4

Alaska* Grants Below Federal Poverty Level

FAMILY SIZE



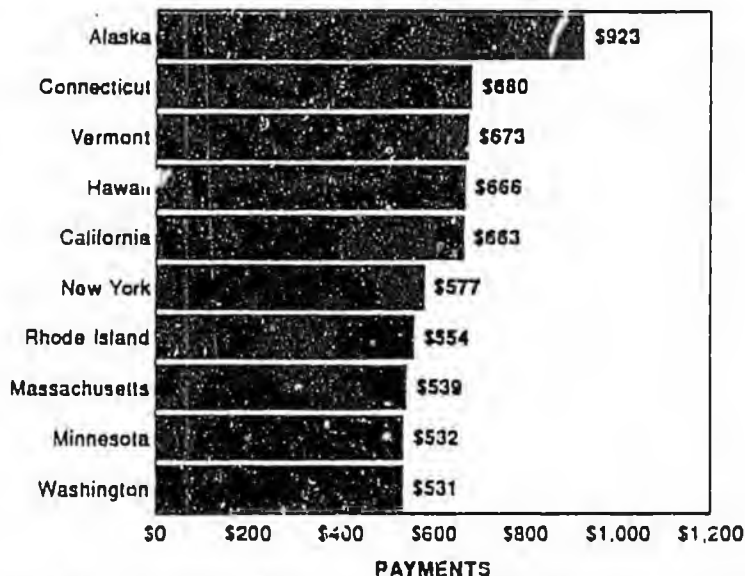
*The Alaska Legislature has appropriated an annual Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). These figures revised November 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Figure • 5

AFDC Benefits in States with Highest Grant Levels—January 1992

FAMILY OF THREE GRANT AMOUNT



Source: Congressional Resource Service, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law.

✓ The resource limit. AFDC clients can only have assets or cash holdings of up to \$1,000. This low savings limit puts clients in a precarious position when leaving the security of the AFDC program. Some states have sought waivers from this regulation while other states are creating escrow accounts to allow recipients to save funds which can only be tapped after they leave AFDC.

✓ The vehicle limit. Families are allowed to own one vehicle worth no more than \$2,500 (if family has no assets). Such vehicles are in frequent need of costly repairs. Unreliable transportation is also a barrier to recipients seeking and keeping jobs and getting children to day care.

✓ Low earned income "disregards". These disregards are earnings which are not counted against the AFDC grant when a recipient works. For AFDC clients working at jobs paying close to the amount of the AFDC grant, this policy provides little incentive to work. Some states are operating demonstrations which allow recipients to keep more of their earned income without losing their grant. These policies encourage work and make the transition from AFDC to work easier.

✓ Transitional medical benefits. Welfare recipients who become employed are now eligible for one year of transitional Medicaid coverage as they leave the AFDC program. Some states are allowing target groups of recipients two years of transitional Medicaid rather than the current one year. The loss of medical coverage is a major concern of AFDC clients when they try to leave the AFDC program.

Most clients want to work

On the Self-Sufficiency Project questionnaire, 88% of clients responding said they would prefer working to receiving AFDC.

In focus groups, clients said the same thing.

AFDC recipients want to work, but they stress that the available jobs pay too little and usually do not offer medical coverage. The cost of day care, generally about \$400 per child, is another barrier for AFDC clients who want to work.

ACCRA Cost of Living Index
First Quarter 1992—10 High Cost Urban Areas

City	Index	Grocery	Housing	Util.	Trans.	Health
1. New York, NY	219.1	141.4	394.2	196.1	127.9	209.9
2. ANCHORAGE, AK	131.0	132.1	141.1	98.5	106.9	178.5
3. KODIAK, AK	145.7	160.6	156.8	172.8	112.2	171.4
4. FAIRBANKS, AK	129.8	125.5	123.2	140.7	115.7	189.9
5. JUNEAU, AK	133.1	137.7	131.7	157.6	129.9	182.2
6. Los Angeles/Long Beach, CA	132.6	107.7	185.3	80.0	119.6	136.5
7. Palm Springs, CA	120.3	106.5	136.8	107.2	118.1	132.9
8. Baltimore, MD	122.3	136.0	118.1	145.8	126.0	126.4
9. Washington, DC	134.4	118.6	175.8	113.7	130.4	142.2
10. Albany, NY	114.2	110.8	119.8	128.2	104.4	112.5

Source: American Chamber of Commerce Research Association (ACCRA).

Common barriers to employment

Figure 6 shows what AFDC clients consider to be the primary barriers to employment. (There may be other barriers to employment such as substance abuse which were under-reported by AFDC clients on the survey results.)

Focus groups were held in Anchorage and Juneau on the topic of AFDC clients' obstacles to work. AFDC clients and staff, AFDC/JOBS clients and staff, and AFDC/Native JOBS clients and staff stated the same points over and over again:

- ✓ Jobs don't pay enough.
- ✓ Clients fear the loss of medical coverage.
- ✓ Day care is too expensive and often unreliable.
- ✓ Clients need basic education, skills and experience.
- ✓ There are no jobs available in rural Alaska.

JOBS training program comprehensive

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training Program, created by the Family Support

Act (FSA) of 1988, addresses the need for skills training, basic education, and work experience which AFDC clients list as primary barriers to becoming employed and getting off welfare. The JOBS program is a federally mandated welfare-to-work program which is currently funded to serve a small percentage of AFDC clients.

JOBS case managers work with participants to identify employment goals and needed job skills. Personal and family needs are also identified and addressed in support groups and with supportive services.

Natives have their own JOBS program

The Family Support Act offered Alaska Native regional corporations the option of operating their own JOBS programs with 100% federal funding. (The JOBS program is required to match federal funds with state funds.) In 1992 there were eleven Native regional corporation grantees which received \$814,470 in federal funds. The largest Native JOBS grantee is Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC).

Alaska JOBS and CITC JOBS are working with the Alaska Department of Education and the Mat-Su School District to provide case management

and other special services to teen parents at an alternative school in Wasilla.

JOBS faces difficult task

The Family Support Act mandates states to provide JOBS services to an increasing number of AFDC clients each year. By 1995, JOBS must serve 20% of nonexempt (mandatory) AFDC-Basic (single parent) clients and 50% of AFDC-UP (two parent) clients while federal allocations do not increase proportionally.

The JOBS program is financed by a state appropriation that matches a "capped" allocation of federal funds. Alaska's FY93 share of the national JOBS allocation is \$1.7 million. Alaska appropriates state general funds in excess of this federal match for adult basic education and alternative high school projects.

In focus groups JOBS participants stressed that the program gave them skills, basic education, help with problems like substance abuse and help in finding work. Intensive case management helped participants with a variety of problems. JOBS participants repeatedly stated that the program provided them with the basic life skills which they lacked.

Both AFDC clients and AFDC/JOBS participants were asked in focus groups and on questionnaires about their expectations for becoming employed and leaving AFDC. JOBS participants responded that the program had prepared them for work and helped them overcome multiple obstacles to becoming self-sufficient. AFDC clients, on the other hand, were frustrated because growing caseloads mean that eligibility technicians are less and less able to provide AFDC clients with the support and resource referrals they need to find jobs and become self-sufficient. The AFDC staff echoed this frustration.

What are other states doing?

Fourteen states have created task forces and commissions to study how to help AFDC clients reach self-sufficiency. Some of these groups are on a parallel course with Alaska's Self-Sufficiency Project, using focus groups and questionnaires to survey AFDC clients and staff. States are watching closely to see what succeeds in other parts of the country. There is an encouraging exchange of information and ideas as the states tackle the same problems—a tight job market, clients with multiple needs, and growing caseloads.

All of the states are in the process of implementing and refining their JOBS programs. Some of the states are allocating additional money to their JOBS programs so that they can serve more participants and provide more support services.

Some states are using federal waivers from the usual provisions governing AFDC programs to experiment with changing behavior and/or with changing the system.

What are waivers?

Simply put, waivers are exemptions from the usual federal provisions governing a state's AFDC program.

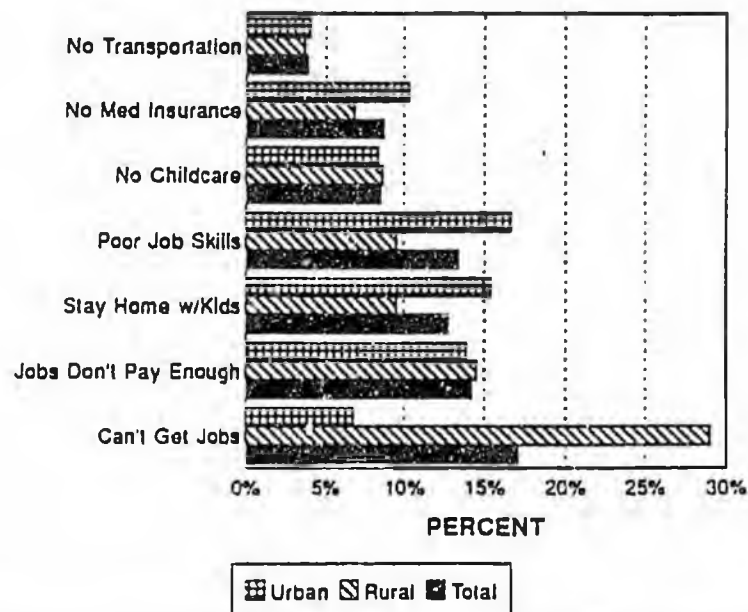
In recent years twelve states have conducted waiver demonstration

Figure 6

Primary Reason for Being on AFDC in Alaska Client Survey/Self-Sufficiency Project

Note: Based on 485 client responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance Self-Sufficiency Project.



projects: California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington and Wisconsin.

The waiver approval process was accelerated in 1992. As of December 1, 1992, "accelerated" waivers had been approved for eight states: Wisconsin, Maryland, California, Oregon, New Jersey, Michigan, Utah and Missouri. Virginia's proposal was pending.

Waiver projects run the gamut

Demonstrations range from those which attempt to change behavior with either positive or negative incentives to those which undertake a complete restructuring of the welfare system and its regulations.

The primary types of behavior encouraged are: school attendance (LEARNFARE), preventive health measures (HEALTHFARE), marriage (WEDFARE or BRIDEFARE), employment (WORKFARE) and not having children while on welfare (FAMILY CAP). Penalties in the form of grant reductions or incentives in the form of bonuses are used to influence behavior.

Some states are trying to discourage migration from other states with two-tiered payment systems. An AFDC client is paid the grant amount of the previous state (if lower) until a recipient is considered a resident of the new state (6 to 12 months).

Some states are proposing to tie benefits to employment, community work or training.

A few states are attempting to save money by reducing grants to earlier levels, by time limiting grants and by limiting eligibility.

Other states are using waiver projects to develop what amounts to alternative welfare programs. Examples of these are New York's Child Assistance Program (CAP), Minnesota's Family Investment Program (FIP), Michigan's "To Strengthen Michigan Families", and Utah's "Single Parent Employment Program."

Waivers Must Meet Two Conditions:

Experimental design and rigorous evaluation is the first condition. A demonstration project must include a rigorous evaluation conducted by an outside evaluator. The cost of this evaluation is shared by the state and federal government and is

Facts about JOBS:

- * JOBS serves hard-to-employ AFDC recipients targeted by federal and state law. These parents are:

Under 24 and lack a high school diploma or have little work experience

On welfare 36 of last 60 months

Parents whose youngest child is 16 years or older

- * 73% of all JOBS participants in Alaska in August 1992 were targeted, long-term, or likely to become long-term welfare recipients with multiple barriers to employment.
- * 460 AFDC recipients were participating at least 20 hours per week in JOBS education, training or employment activities in June, 1992, while a total of 808 were participating in JOBS at some level.
- * During August, 1992, 97 JOBS participants were employed for wages.
- * In August 1992, 37 JOBS participants were gaining work experience in Job Sampling, an unpaid work experience activity. During the first nine months of 1992, a total of 86 participants had participated in Job Sampling.
- * In any month, 18-28% of JOBS participants need adult basic education services before they are "training ready."
- * JOBS achieved a 15.5% federally measured participation rate in FY91, double the 7% requirement.
- * 341 children were served by JOBS Child Care in July 1992; 65% of JOBS parents needed child care to participate in JOBS.

exempt from the second required condition, cost neutrality. Control and experimental groups are typically required in such experiments. Cost estimates by states run from \$20,000 for a simple waiver project to several million dollars for more complicated projects.

Cost neutrality is the second condition. When a state undertakes a waiver project, it must show that total federal costs are no higher than they would have been without the demonstration project. The state must assume any fiscal risk if the project turns out to cost more than anticipated.

Pros and cons of some waivers for Alaska

The Self-Sufficiency Project has reviewed various waiver demonstrations to see if they are appropriate for Alaska. To date, Alaska has not submitted any waiver applications.

Some of the more noteworthy demonstrations:

The Family CAP Program reduces or eliminates increases in the AFDC grant for children conceived after a parent is on welfare. New Jersey has a Family CAP program and Wisconsin's Supreme Court is reviewing the Family CAP program for constitutionality. In 1992, thirteen state legislatures rejected Family CAP proposals.

The two main arguments for Family CAP are that the traditional grant increase for additional children encourages welfare parents to have children and that working people do not receive salary increases for the birth of a child.

The arguments against this policy are that only a small percentage of AFDC clients have large families (9% with over three children in Alaska); that the birthrate for AFDC and non-AFDC families is about the same; that the grant increase is small (\$102 per month for an additional child in Alaska); that the program was created to serve children, not penalize them; that working parents do in fact get an "incentive" in the form of additional tax deductions for additional children.

The *two-tiered benefit program* pays a lower grant to new AFDC clients to a state if the state of previous residence had a lower AFDC grant. Usually clients receive the lower grant for 6-12 months, until they become residents of the new state.

Results of two surveys show that people are not coming to Alaska for the AFDC benefits. Some anecdotal stories persist, however, and there is an occasional AFDC recipient who has moved to Alaska to collect AFDC benefits.

The primary disadvantage of the two-tiered program is that clients may be unable to live on the interim amount provided while in a state such as Alaska with much higher costs. Again, it may well be the children who suffer.

New Jersey and Maryland have two-tiered payment programs which began in 1992. Wisconsin's two-tiered benefit payment program is scheduled to commence in 1994.

Learnfare is aimed at keeping children in school to help break the welfare cycle. After a child misses school a certain number of times, the family may be penalized with a reduction in their grant. Other states use a bonus system to encourage children to go to school.

Other Subsidies Available to Recipients

Medicaid is a medical payment program funded about equally by the federal government and by the state. Medicaid is provided to low income individuals. In September 1992 there were about 28,100 Medicaid cases. All AFDC recipients (about 11,000 cases or 32,600 recipients) are eligible to receive Medicaid. About 660 adults are receiving one year of transitional Medicaid benefits as they leave the AFDC program. The balance of Medicaid recipients is made up of the aged, blind and disabled and poverty level children and pregnant women.

Food Stamps are fully funded by the federal government. Recipients must meet certain federal guidelines which include income and resource limits. The maximum amount which a household of three can receive per month is \$376 in urban areas and between \$479 and \$583 in rural areas. Benefits are made in the form of food coupons. In September 1992, approximately 13,600 households received Food Stamps in Alaska. About 8,000 of these were AFDC households.

Housing Assistance in the form of low rent housing, Native rent subsidies and Section 8 assistance is used by about 30% of AFDC clients statewide. After deductions for each child in the family and for utility costs, a housing subsidy recipient pays 30% of their income as rent.

Energy Assistance is available to households in the state with an income less than 140% of the poverty level. This program makes payments to renters for home heating costs. The Energy Assistance Program served 11,380 households in 1991-92. An estimated 3,400 of these were AFDC households. The yearly grant averaged \$380 but varied from region to region in the state.

Initial results from a University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, study show that children in the counties studied actually missed school more often than those not targeted for a benefit reduction. Wisconsin plans to do a more rigorous evaluation of the program to check the results of the first study.

One criticism of this program is that attendance in itself does not guarantee learning. Another is that the program adds a substantial administrative burden to schools and AFDC agencies.

Healthfare programs encourage preventive health care through grant reductions (Maryland) or through grant bonuses (Virginia). These programs are administratively complex. Results are not available on their impact.

Wedfare/Bridefare programs encourage marriage with bonuses or penalties. Wisconsin is experimenting with this program which tests the hypothesis that encouraging marriage will cause single mothers to leave the welfare rolls.

Alternate welfare systems are New York's Child Assistance Program (CAP), Michigan's program and Minnesota's Family Investment Program (FIP) which have been mentioned earlier in this article. These programs, unlike the demonstrations which isolate types of behavior and attempt to change them, allow clients to keep more of their earned income (earned income disregards) and to accumulate more resources. New York's Cap program allows participants to own a vehicle of any value. Participants in these programs are usually exempt from the 100 hour rule.

Utah has also designed a program which waives some of the regulations which discourage work. Iowa is designing a program which moves from income maintenance to an asset-based policy which encourages AFDC clients to save and invest in the state's economic development.

What do these waiver demonstrations show?

Most of these projects are still in the planning stage or have just commenced. For example, Wisconsin's much publicized Family Cap which cuts benefits for children born on AFDC is still under review by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. There is data available on some early projects which indicates that the waiver of the 100-hour rule (Fresno and Merced Counties, California) encourages work. Alternate welfare systems like New York's Child Assistance Program (CAP) appear to foster self-sufficiency by making the transition off welfare easier for clients.

Other projects may not require waivers

There are two other types of projects which provide work experience and which encourage employment. Depending on how the programs are designed, they may or may not require federal waivers.

Community Work Experience (CWE) creates unpaid public sector jobs for AFDC clients so that they will gain work experience. These jobs could provide useful community services which are not currently provided. But again, the cost of running such a program would be high, and an administra-

Self-Sufficiency Project Survey Highlights

The Self-Sufficiency Project survey elicited the following information from clients and staff:

- 88% of AFDC clients responding said that they would rather work than receive welfare.
- 94% of clients responding said that AFDC regulations about such items as asset limits and transitional benefits should be changed.
- 78% of clients responding said that they would do community or volunteer work to gain experience.
- Lack of medical coverage is a major barrier to self-sufficiency.
- Day care is too costly, often unavailable, sometimes unreliable.

AFDC clients and staff and JOBS/Native JOBS participants and staff were asked a variety of questions about barriers to employment, the help needed to get off welfare, and changes which should be made to the welfare system. Some interesting information provided by the survey is found in Charts 7 through 12.

tive structure would need to be created for the program.

Work Supplementation pays part of the cost of an employee so that employers are encouraged to hire AFDC clients. The employee's AFDC grant makes up the balance of the employee's wage. The principal disadvantage of such a program is that it may take jobs from non-AFDC workers. On the positive side, employers might be encouraged to add additional staff because the cost for the added employee would be low.

Should Alaska do a waiver demonstration?

As a welfare reform coordinator in another state put it, "Welfare reform ain't cheap."

The Self-Sufficiency Project has looked at demonstration projects and waiver proposals in other states. Those projects which eliminate federal regulations discouraging work and which make the transition off welfare easier for clients have merit. But waivers cost money and they only affect a target group of AFDC clients.

Project design and application costs, computer system redesign, and additional staff to monitor and collect data required for the evaluation are some of the additional costs which a state faces in conducting a waiver project. Another cost is the outside evaluation which runs from \$20-30,000 for a simple waiver to several million dollars for more complex waivers. States with large AFDC populations have the advantage of a larger administrative budget to absorb these costs. Alaska's AFDC population is relatively small compared to other states.

A waiver would require that some AFDC recipients are treated differently than others. Since waiver demonstrations are intended to gain research data, clients are divided into experimental and control groups. Different sets of program rules would be applied to experimental and control groups over the life of the demonstration project.

The Alaska Division of Public Assistance is assessing the costs and benefits of experimental projects which would create increased incentives to work.

What is Alaska doing?

A great deal.

One of Alaska's key strategies for helping AFDC clients attain self-sufficiency is the JOBS program. The JOBS program, a federally mandated welfare-to-work program for AFDC clients, provides basic education and skills to a small percentage of AFDC clients with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency.

The JOBS program was created by the Alaska State Legislature, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Departments of Labor, Community and Regional Affairs, and Ed-

Figure • 7

AFDC Clients' Plans for Self-Sufficiency in Alaska

Note: Based on 485 client responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance Self-Sufficiency Project.

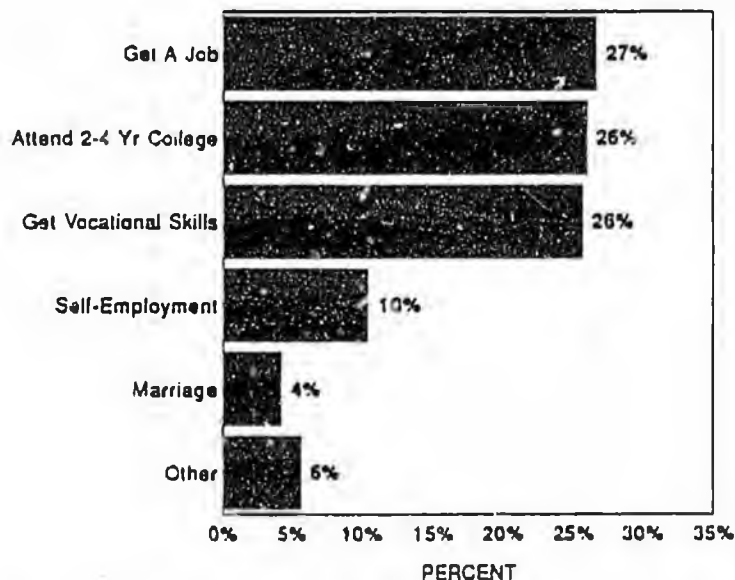


Figure • 8

How Long Since AFDC Clients' Last Job? Alaska Self-Sufficiency Project

ucation. The legislature has appropriated additional funds to the JOBS program for adult basic education and teen parent services. Preliminary results show that this program is effective in moving long term dependent clients into jobs and off welfare.

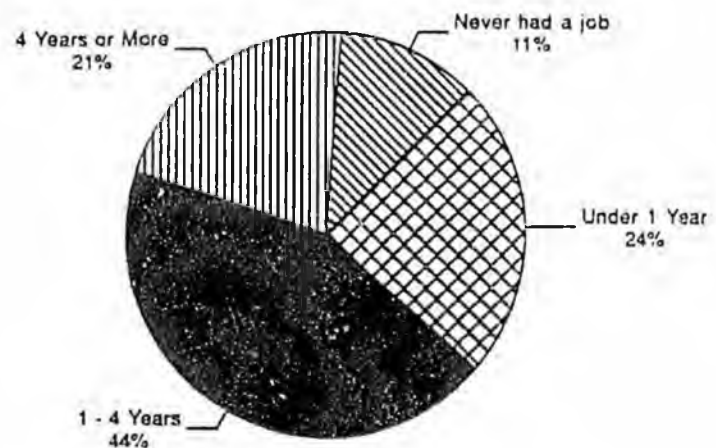
The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Department of Revenue is establishing and enforcing child support orders at a dramatically increasing rate.

Several agencies are working together to explore the creation of rural jobs. The Department of Health and Social Services has awarded contracts to private agencies to provide homecare services in six of ten regions statewide, enabling clients to stay in their homes. Individuals in rural communities can train to become Personal Care Attendants. (See insert.)

The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), Public Housing Division is initially targeting the Anchorage area for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. (See insert.)

Alaska is looking at the coordination of social services so that AFDC clients are provided with increased access to mental health and substance abuse programs.

Alaska will also watch closely the waiver projects conducted by other states to see what works in helping clients get off AFDC and become self-sufficient.



Note: Based on 485 client responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance Self-Sufficiency Project.

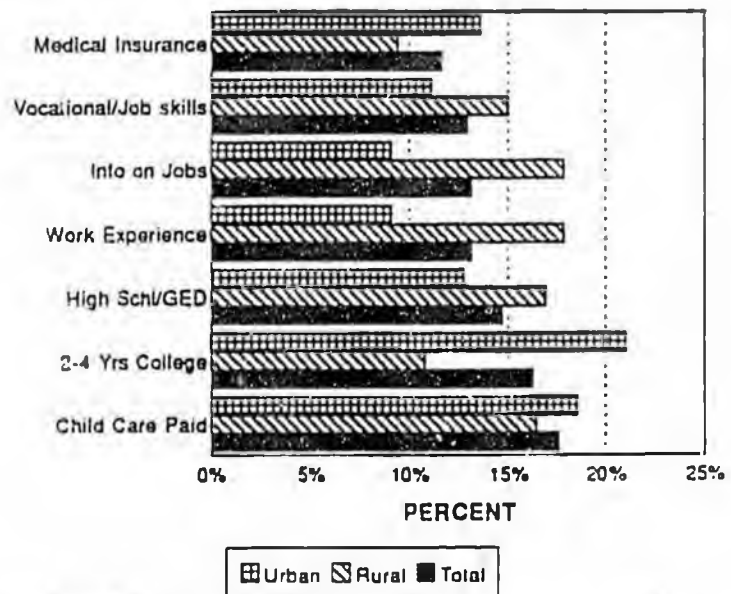
Figure • 9

Primary Help Needed to Become Self-Sufficient Client Responses/AK Self-Sufficiency Project

Self-Sufficiency Project Client and Staff Survey

A comprehensive questionnaire was sent out in July, 1992 to over 1,000 AFDC clients in a statistically valid survey. Another 40 clients were interviewed by phone and 40 clients were interviewed in depth during Quality Control interviews. Random sampling was done for each of these questionnaires. There were 485 responses received back (49% of questionnaires sent out to clients.)

Clients were asked a number of questions about what they perceived to be their barriers to employment and self-sufficiency, about what help they needed to get work and leave welfare, and about how the welfare system could be changed to better serve clients and promote their self-sufficiency.



Note: Based on 485 client responses in August 1992.

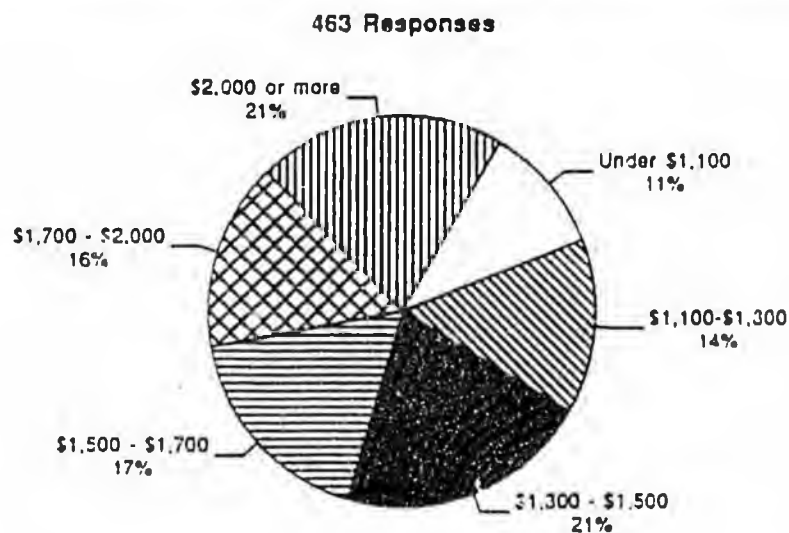
Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance Self-Sufficiency Project.

A questionnaire was also sent out to all eligibility technicians (about 200 staff statewide), and to all JOBS case managers (about seventy staff statewide). Approximately 50% of staff returned these questionnaires. Eligibility technicians and JOBS staff were asked what they perceived to be clients' barriers to employment, what help they thought that clients needed to become self-sufficient, and about changes that could be made to the AFDC program to make it serve clients better and to promote self-sufficiency.

The following charts give some of the information derived from the Self-Sufficiency project survey: Figure 7 gives AFDC clients' plans for becoming self-sufficient; Figure 8 shows how long it has been since AFDC clients' last full time employment; Figure 9 shows the help which clients stated that they needed in order to get jobs; Figure 10 shows how much clients think that they need to earn to leave AFDC; Figure 11 shows what eligibility technicians think is the most important help that clients need to leave AFDC; Figure 12 shows what eligibility technicians perceive to be the primary reason for being on AFDC.

Figure • 10

How Much Pay Do You Need to Get off AFDC* Client Survey



* Per month.

Note: Based on 463 client responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

Project held focus groups

Eleven focus group meetings were held by the Self-Sufficiency Project Coordinator in Juneau and Anchorage. Meetings were held with AFDC clients and staff and JOBS/Native JOBS participants and staff. A total of about 175 people participated in these meetings.

"Jobs don't pay enough." One of the issues that surfaced most often was the fact that jobs which AFDC clients are likely to get don't pay enough to live on and do not provide medical benefits. Clients stressed their concerns about losing Medicaid once off AFDC. They also spoke of the high cost of day care. AFDC clients talked about their lack of skills and basic education which hampered them in getting jobs.

"Being an eligibility technician is like putting your head in a washing machine and screaming." Eligibility technicians who work with AFDC clients complained of an overwhelming and growing caseload. They were frustrated at having little time to refer clients to community and job resources. They also criticized federal regulations which discouraged their clients from seeking employment.

"In the villages, we're the new middle class. If AFDC says we have to get married, then that is what we do." Rural clients were frustrated by the lack of jobs in village areas and by their dependence on AFDC.

"The JOBS Program works." JOBS participants spoke of their success at acquiring basic education and skills for jobs. Some mentioned that the intensive case management provided helped them with problems like substance abuse and the need for parenting and general life skills. JOBS staff were pleased with the successes of the participants with whom they worked. Both staff and participants were concerned about a job market that offered JOBS participants mainly low paid service work without benefits like medical insurance.

Native JOBS staff and participants were happy with the intensive case management, education and skills training which they received.

Other Issues Surfaced in Meetings

- Medical insurance is too costly for low income families.

Figure • 11

- Day Care is too costly, often unavailable, sometimes unreliable. Large employers should be required to provide day care.
- The AFDC regulations provide little incentive to work. Regulations which were mentioned repeatedly were the 100-hour rule, the amount of earned income an AFDC client could keep, the amount of assets a client could have (\$1,000), and the value of an automobile that AFDC clients can have (\$1,500 or \$2,500 if no assets).
- AFDC clients need to learn many life skills.
- Pregnancy prevention should be taught in schools.
- More transitional medical benefits should be made available to clients trying to get off AFDC.

Conclusions

The major issues are obvious and shared by all states, but it is the federal government which can act.

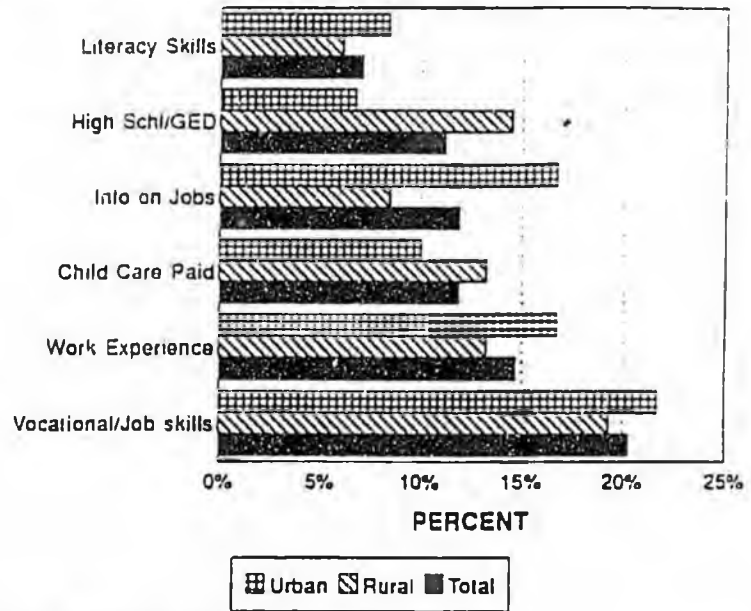
The accelerated waiver process is the federal government's attempt to look for ways to change the welfare system. States, including Alaska, are in agreement that some AFDC changes are obvious ones:

Eliminating the 100-hour rule for AFDC-UP families would encourage work. Under the current provisions, clients are discouraged from taking full time, low paid jobs because they lose benefits like Medicaid. Eliminating the 100-hour rule would allow AFDC-UP eligibility to be based solely on income rather than on income and number of hours worked.

Allowing AFDC clients to retain more of their earned income on a graduated scale over a longer period of time would encourage work. This work incentive could be accomplished by changing the earned income disregard provisions in the AFDC program.

Allowing clients to save more money would provide them with more security when leaving the AFDC system. This work incentive could be accomplished with a change in the resource limit provisions in the AFDC program.

**Most Important Way to Help Get Off AFDC
Eligibility Technician Survey**

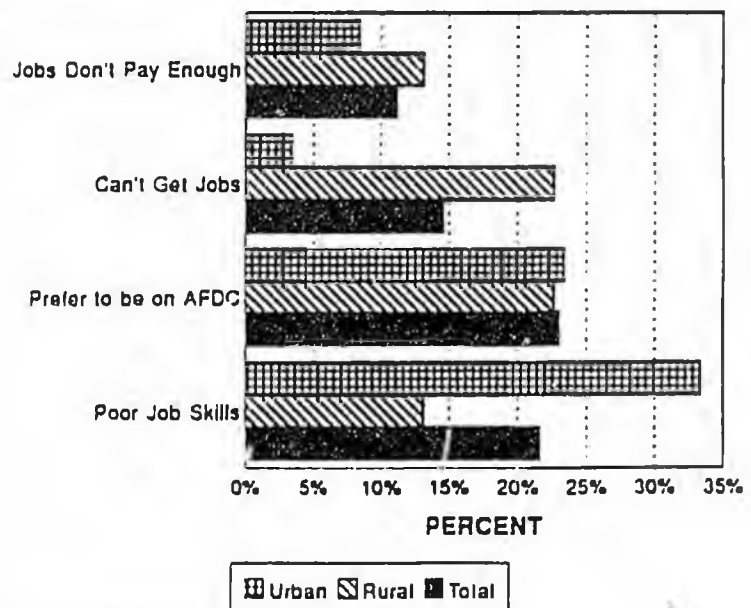


Note: Based on 150 eligibility technician responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance, Self-Sufficiency Project.

Figure • 12

**Primary Reason for Being on AFDC
Eligibility Technician Survey**



Note: Based on 150 eligibility technician responses in August 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Assistance, Self-Sufficiency Project.

Providing clients with longer transitional benefits would encourage work. Clients often leave AFDC for jobs which do not provide medical coverage. These clients are now provided with one year of transitional benefits like Medicaid.

And a major national issue remains to be addressed—the lack of medical coverage for a large

part of the U.S. population. AFDC clients in Alaska stated that the lack of medical coverage is a major barrier to leaving AFDC. (See Figure 8.)

Welfare reform staffs in all states agree on one thing—a hope that this time of turmoil, questioning and change will lead to a program that works.

Public Housing and Family Self-Sufficiency

In the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, Congress mandated that the Public Housing Authorities develop and operate a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program by October, 1993. The FSS program encourages low income families to pursue education, training and/or supportive services leading to employment. The program uses rent vouchers as an incentive for participation.

Statewide, about 30% of all families in assisted housing are also receiving AFDC. In Anchorage that figure is closer to 40%. The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) is initially targeting the Anchorage area for the FSS program.

The Alaska Departments of Labor, Health and Social Services and the Anchorage JTPA program are working to provide social services for the program.

Homecare Services/Developing Jobs In Rural Communities

The Department of Health and Social Services has awarded contracts to private agencies to provide homecare services in six of ten regions statewide, thus expanding private sector employment.

The purpose of homecare services contracts is the provision of personal care and chore services to elderly and disabled people throughout the state. Homecare services will enable clients to stay in their own homes and communities. The consolidation of the Home Health Aide, Homemaker and Personal Care Attendant programs into one program simplifies access for clients.

Funding will be available through the Department of Community and Regional Affairs for job training for individuals in rural communities to become Personal Care Attendants.

Approximately 700 individuals are served each month in 55 communities throughout the state. About 67% of those communities are considered to be rural.

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(9)

Date Referred: March 26, 1993

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 4-14-93

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered:

HJR 36

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36 . REPEAL 100 HOUR RULE FOR AFDC PROGRAM
 Urging the federal Department of Health and Human Services to repeal the "100-hour rule" relating to employment of certain persons receiving AFDC and to replace it with a regulation that will serve as an incentive for AFDC recipients to accept part-time employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

be replaced with CS HJR 36 (HSS) the same title
 a new title

have attached amendments(s)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendations

individual recommendations

additional referral to the _____ Committee

ADOPTS: _____ letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept)

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date)

fiscal impact _____

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note HSS

zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING DO PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	DNP	NR	AM
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 CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE