

# Children's lives no better under welfare reform, study concludes [US] <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Miller, Carol Marbin

**Source:** The Miami Herald

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 16 Apr 2002

## AVAILABILITY

Text below

### EXCERPTS:

Single mothers who entered the job market in the first wave of welfare reform are earning slightly more money than they did under public assistance, but their small gains have not resulted in better lives for their young children.

A study that looked at the lives of single mothers with very young children in Florida, California and Connecticut concluded that welfare reform has "not discernibly improved the living conditions of families or the lives of young children." The study followed more than 700 mothers in 1998 and 2000.

A joint research effort by four of the nation's most prestigious institutions -- the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University's Teacher's College, Yale University and Stanford University -- comes at a particularly critical time: President Bush and Congress are now debating an overhaul of the nation's welfare reform policy.

While the study concluded welfare reform has not harmed young children, as children's advocates had originally predicted, it also showed the far-reaching policy change did little to help children.

Lawmakers had suggested welfare-to-work programs would improve the lives of children raised in public assistance programs.

"When you talk about very young children, our hopes would be that, indeed, progress would be made," said Sharon Lynn Kagan, a professor of child and family policy at Columbia University who co-directed the study. "In fact, we're not seeing a whole lot of progress."

In recent weeks, the Bush administration has proposed revamping welfare-to-work policy to improve child welfare and development, and encourage more single mothers to marry. Specific proposals include initiatives that would double the work requirements for women and require more mothers to work.

One perhaps unintended benefit of the welfare reform movement was the rise in the number of toddlers attending child care centers, the authors said.

Small children who were enrolled in child care centers -- which accounted for one-third of the children studied -- "displayed higher levels of emerging literacy skills, compared to those" who did not.

Among the children who were attending child care centers, the gains in child development were roughly equivalent to four months in kindergarten, said Bruce Fuller, a professor at Berkeley who co-directed the study. "

And the advances are even higher for those children at quality centers and pre-schools." \$13,000 SALARY Nationwide, the single mothers who were part of the study earned slightly more than \$13,000 per year, on average, the study said.

Many of the mothers worked odd hours, including the graveyard shift, and moved from job to job with great frequency. Two in five of the mothers said they had to quit a job last year for lack of child care, Fuller said.

In Tampa, the site of the Florida portion of the study, the percentage of single mothers currently employed increased from 27 percent in 1998 to 57 percent in 2000, the report said. Total monthly income for the women -- which included both wage earnings and some public assistance -- rose from \$706 in 1998 to \$900 in 2000.

Study authors point out, however, that these small gains did not result in any appreciable rise in the quality of life for the women and their children. One in six of the women studied still visited food banks to feed their families; one in five lived in roach-infested housing, and two in five continued to suffer from depression.

The additional income likely pays for expenses the women never had before joining the job market, including bus or subway fare to and from work, and suitable wardrobe. Some of the women also may be using the additional income to reduce their debt, Fuller said.

reprinted from the Miami Herald.

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** availability <sup>[3]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/08/childrens-lives-no-better-under-welfare-reform-study-concludes-us>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/08/childrens-lives-no-better-under-welfare-reform-study-concludes-us> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/availability>