

Who Receives Family Aid -- And Why

EDITOR'S NOTE: Welfare costs have ballooned in Michigan in recent years. In this article, the first of two, a team of five Michigan State University Journalism students takes a look at the program of aid to Families of Dependent Children. The authors are Rhoda Weiss, Paula Johnson, Laurel Hood, Valerie Thomas and Charles Namit.

A young girl carrying a crying infant walks into the

Wayne County Social Services office. She is 16, unmarried, unemployed -- and a mother. She is also one of a small but constant stream of persons, black and white, old and young, married and single, who comprise the 104,077 cases on the receiving end of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Michigan.

The target of criticism from

taxpayers and legislators, AFDC is often dubbed a "free ride" for a mother who is too lazy to work to support her family. Critics say AFDC is not doing its job, and that the children for whom it is intended fail to receive its benefits.

WHO ACTUALLY receives AFDC? Is it a self-perpetuating circuit on which families ride for generations? According to Michigan welfare statistics, a typical AFDC family consists of a mother with three dependent children. She is usually married, but is separated from her husband. Usually the family has been broken by divorce, separation or desertion. Few cases involve fathers who are dead or disabled.

The complaint that each child in an AFDC family has a different father is not substantiated by the facts. In Michigan, 65 per cent of the cases involve children in a family where all have the same mother and father. There is also a racial and geographical slant to AFDC statistics. Although only 10 per cent of the general population in the state is black, blacks comprise more than half of the AFDC cases. Nearly half of Michigan's cases live in Detroit.

The belief that welfare tends to breed people who believe in it as a way of life is not necessarily true. Only 20 per cent of the mothers currently receiving AFDC received it when they were children, and half of the current AFDC cases have been in the program less than two years.

THOSE WHO receive AFDC are as critical of the system as those who finance it.

The Welfare Rights Organization has demanded that the federal government supply a guaranteed income of \$6,500 per year for a family of four, not the \$1,600 which is currently allotted or the \$2,400 which President Nixon's proposed Family Assistance Program would provide.

But there is some doubt whether the government can afford to provide an "adequate" income for those on AFDC. A cooperative federal-state program, AFDC paid out \$23.9 million in fiscal 1970, an average of \$229.75 per case.

Both the cost and the caseload have doubled in the state in the past two years, causing administrative as well as financial woes. The caseload expanded to its present level as a result of two increases in the income allotments set by the state and because of the General Motors strike which idled thousands of workers in November 1970. Wayne County, the largest caseload in the state, included in their roles 40,309 families in February 1971, up from the February 1970 total of 29,832. The third largest county in number of families is Oakland, reporting 6,036 families for February 1971, an increase from the 3,211 a year before.

A THREATENED delay in April AFDC payments when the state fund ran dry was

averted when the Michigan Legislature transferred \$45 million from the uninsured motorist fund.

Though \$6.6 million in checks was mailed for April, welfare agents anticipate the state will need as much as an additional \$20 million to finish out fiscal 1971.

"We work with the money we get from the Legislature, and if we run out, we'll just have to go back to them," said Leo R. Guilmette, Social Services programs specialist.

MANY COUNTIES have adopted the self-declared eligibility process in which a woman signs an affidavit declaring herself eligible for AFDC payments. Questions have arisen about possible fraud.

"There are always some who try to conceal something," said Guilmette, "but the AFDC recipient has the responsibility to report any outside income."

If she fails to do so, and the department finds out about it, action taken depends on individual circumstances, he said.

"We may take legal action and go to the prosecutor. But only the courts can force them to repay the money," he said.

"And even then there is strong doubt that the family can repay the money."

An AFDC mother who is unemployed, and who has no

source of income other than her AFDC allotment, receives \$44 for herself and for each child under 18 years of age, a monthly shelter allowance and money for utilities and incidentals which amounts to about \$20 per month.

The shelter allowance varies within Michigan from \$80 to \$145 according to the cost of living standards set by the Legislature.

For a family of four living in Wayne or Oakland County, then the total monthly AFDC check would be about \$325. The basic grant would be worth about \$3,900 per year -- more in some parts of the state; less in others.

IF AN AFDC family takes advantage of federal Medicaid and food stamp programs, it is possible to gain up to \$5,000 in money and services in a year. And if the recipient is employed, the total may be even higher under a liberalized disregard policy.

A 1967 amendment to the Social Security Act requires the state to supply incentive to work for welfare recipients. Now, a woman may keep the first \$30 of income per month she earns without affecting the size of her AFDC check. After that, she keeps one-third of the check free, and the remaining two-thirds is

deducted from her welfare check.

The state is also required to take care of all work expenses, including taxes and union fees up to \$40 per month.

Nevertheless, it costs to work, said Miss Judith Lachman, an assistant director of the Social Services Research Department. Parents are away from their children; they must transport them to and from babysitters and schools, and must get themselves to work too, she said.

WHEN A PERSON qualifies for assistance, the agency takes into consideration personal wealth as well as income, she explained, so few welfare clients have cars. Because she must rely on public transportation and often works far from where she lives, the AFDC mother can effectively have a 12-to-14 hour day before she even begins to do her own housework, Miss Lachman said.

The cost of working just often is not worth the increase in income for the mother with small children, she said. Numerous complaints from mothers about the availability of day care centers and the level at which the income disregard is set have led to a series of Social Services

department hearings. "The result seems to point to a hike in the allowable monthly disregard in the future."

"People want to work and are hindered by other things," said Miss Lachman. "Either the allowable grant must be adequate, or we must make it possible for suitable child care centers and income disregards so people can work and not lose money."

STEREOLAND SONY SPECTACULAR!
FACTORY AUTHORIZED SALE

STEREOLAND

REG. \$59.95
SALE PRICE
\$49.95

STEREOLAND

DETROIT: 17123 W. McNichols, 273-8821
GRAND PONTIAC: 20740 Mack, 484-3000
ROCKFORD: 128 E. Main, 851-3346
SOUTHGATE: 12460 Northline, 285-3777

LIVONIA
33111 Plymouth Rd.
DETROIT 10
261-8170

BIG TOP SPECIALS
HUNDREDS OF APPLIANCES, TV'S AND STEREOS NOW AT LOW TENT SALE PRICES!

3 CYCLE GENERAL ELECTRIC AUTOMATIC WASHER
• 3 motor temperatures
• Patented cycle
• Includes Water Saver
• Rinse-Rinse system
\$198

FAMILY SIZE SOLID STATE CHASSIS
for cooler operation
\$55

PHILCO PERSONAL PORTABLE TV
• 9000 VOLTS OF PICTURE POWER
• SOLID STATE CHASSIS-ONLY ONE TUBE
• 3 INCH UP-FRONT SPEAKER
• ALL 82 CHANNELS VHF, UHF
\$57.95

PORTABLE TV 12 INCH
• 82 Channels
• Best-in-Home
\$57.95

13.5 Cu. Ft. GENERAL ELECTRIC REFRIGERATOR FREEZER
• Freezer holds up to 131 lbs.
• Shelves in the door
• Two vegetable bins
\$239

Only 28" Wide GENERAL ELECTRIC 11.5 CU. FT. DIAL DEFROST REFRIGERATOR
• Freezer holds up to 81 lbs.
• Fast melt power-frost evaporator
• Shelves in the door
\$178

BIG FREEZER CAPACITY GENERAL ELECTRIC 16.6 CU. FT. NO-FROST REFRIGERATOR
• Freezer holds up to 154 lbs.
• Provision to add automatic ice-maker on later
\$289

POCKET SIZE TRANSISTOR BATTERY POWERED
\$1.99

SIGNAL-LITE AND FAN SHUT-OFF
\$6

DEHUMIDIFIER
• 15 PINT CAPACITY
• HUMIDISTAT
\$62.88

10 LB. BAG CHARCOAL
EMT 3 BAGS PER CONTAINER
39.95

General Portable CASSETTE TAPE RECORDER
RECORDS & PLAYS BACK
\$34.95

10,500 BTU FASHIONAIRE QUIET AIR CONDITIONER
• Operates on 115 volts
• Combination air conditioner
\$34.95

GET BERRY'S RED, RIPE WHOLE WATERMELON
WITH PURCHASE OF ANY MAJOR APPLIANCE DURING THIS SALE

REMEMBER - YOU GET SERVICE AFTER THE SALE AT

BERRY'S
HOME SUPPLY STORE and WAREHOUSE OUTLET
27419 JOY ROAD
at Inkster Rd., Westland
KE 5-5060
GA 1-1717

JOY RD. INKSTER RD.

State Awards Road Contracts

Contracts have been awarded by the State Highway

Commission to low bidders on projects involving Wayne and Oakland County.

Chapman Division of the Crane Co. from Indian Orchard, Mass. was the only bidder for fabrication of cone valves to relocate water mains under the Interstate 96 Freeway at Coyle Avenue in Detroit, and under Interstate 696 at Schoenherr Ave. in Warren. The bid was \$244,858. Midwest Bridge Co. in Williamston bid \$37,213 for a highway signing project on a 5.4 mile stretch of M-59 in Sterling Heights.

A PROJECT to widen and repave the intersection of 12 Mile and Lahser Roads in Oak Park and Southfield will be done by Oak Construction Co. in Royal Oak.

A \$5.7 million project to construct three-tenths of a mile stretch of Interstate 96 between Fullerton and Cloverlawn Ave. in Detroit, was awarded to the lowest of five bidders, Walter Toebe and Co. in Wixom.

LaRue Joins Millage Group

John M. LaRue, member of the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees, was appointed by the board to serve on the steering committee for the millage election.

The millage election will be held Sept. 13.

The college will ask for a half-mill for operating and a half-mill for general purposes.

NOW IS Spring Trade-Up Time!

Get the ONE with POWER PLUS!

FREE MOWER WITH PURCHASE

CUB CADET tractor

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER CO.

31666 8 MILE ROAD

476-0960

HUDSON'S NORTHLAND AND WESTLAND DRUG STORES WEEK END SPECIALS

SORRY, NO MAIL OR PHONE ORDERS.

Tanya sun tan lotion
4 oz. Special **99¢**

Off insect repellent spray
6 1/2 oz. Special **66¢**

Excedrin
375's Special **2.49**

J & J cosmetic puffs
100's Special **4/7**

VO 5 hair spray
17 oz. Special **1.19**

Clairol shampoo formula
Special **1.09**

Kaopectate
12 oz. Special **89¢**

Effident denture tablets
96's Special **1.19**

HUDSON'S drug stores

WHIRLPOOL
Are You in Pain With ARTHRITIS
Rheumatism - Aching Back
Tension Headaches
Muscular Fatigue - Tired Feet
Stressful Nights
The Up of Whirlpool Bath
No Pain No Gain

NOW AT A PRICE EVERYONE CAN AFFORD
Write for a FREE BROCHURE and we'll mail it to you
Factory Rep & Out

Emery Sales Co.
18357 W. OUTER DRIVE
DETROIT
DU 1-6811