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Low-Income Women's Access to Education? A Case Study of Welfare Recipients in Boston

Erika Kates

University of Massachusetts Boston

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Research Report

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy • McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies

Low-Income Women's Access to Education?

A Case-Study of Welfare Recipients in Boston

SPRING 2007

Erika Kates



The Center for
**WOMEN IN POLITICS
& PUBLIC POLICY**

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CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS & PUBLIC POLICY
John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125-3393

Ph: 617.287.5541
Fax: 617.287.5544
Email: cwppp@umb.edu
Web: www.mccormack.umb.edu/cwppp

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erika Kates has been research director at the Center since 2002. She has conducted research on the effects of the intersection of welfare, workforce development and education policy on women's lives for over two decades, and published widely in this area. She has taught many research and public policy courses at Smith College, Tufts University, and the University of Massachusetts both in Amherst and Boston. Other research projects have included housing and homelessness; women's health; and criminal justice/corrections.



Low-Income Women's Access to Education? *A Case-study of Welfare Recipients in Boston*

Helping the parents is key because the parents must first learn in order for them to teach the kids....In order for the family to advance the parents must first advance themselves. (Focus group participant)

In 2003 and 2004, the Massachusetts legislature dramatically changed state law to allow welfare recipients to engage in education and training to fulfill their mandatory work requirements. The research reported here had as its goal to document whether women who received welfare benefits between 2003 and 2006 knew about, and took advantage of, these historic changes. A fundamental supposition of the research described here is that low-income women should have access to substantive educational opportunities to improve their employment and earnings; raise children with educational aspirations and achievements; enhance their civic participation; and contribute to the state's human capital resources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Low-Income Women’s Access to Education?

A Case Study of Welfare Recipients in Boston

BACKGROUND	1
The Link between Economic Progress and Postsecondary Education	1
Women and Economic Inequity	1
Federal and State Policies Affecting Low-Income Women’s Access to Education.	2
<i>Federal Welfare Policy, 1996</i>	
<i>State Welfare Policy, 1996</i>	
<i>Changes in Massachusetts Welfare Statutes, 2003–2004</i>	
<i>PRWORA Reauthorized in 2006</i>	
The Larger Context: A Review of Statewide Participation in DTA Work Activities, 2002–2006	4
A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL ACCESS IN BOSTON.	6
Research Goals and Basic Premises	6
Case Study Research Design	6
Research Methods	6
<i>Participatory Research Model</i>	
<i>The Research Team and Planning Process</i>	
<i>Community Researcher Recruitment and Training</i>	
<i>Focus Group Recruitment</i>	
<i>The Focus Groups</i>	
Information Sources	8
<i>Welfare Recipients</i>	
<i>Administrators</i>	
RESEARCH FINDINGS	10
Participation in Education	10
Barriers.	10
<i>Personal and Family Problems</i>	
<i>Lack of Options</i>	
<i>Lack of Childcare and Transportation</i>	
<i>Onerous Welfare Policies and Practices</i>	
<i>Negative Caseworker/Client Interactions</i>	
<i>Inadequate Dissemination of Critical Information</i>	
<i>Limited Interpretations of the 12-Month Rule</i>	
<i>Restrictive Interpretation of the 20-, 24-, and 30-Hour Work Requirements</i>	
<i>Lack of Interaction between Agencies</i>	
Promising Opportunities	14
Summary of Research Findings	15
RECOMMENDATIONS.	16
Endnotes	18
References	20

BACKGROUND: THE LINK BETWEEN ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Equality of opportunity is a fundamental premise of a democratic society, and one of the most important areas to realize such equality is in access to education. In Massachusetts, particularly over the past two decades, this ideal has been fueled by economic necessity. State income data show that Massachusetts has one of the highest rates of economic inequality in the nation, and during this twenty-year period only individuals with postsecondary education and households with dual earners have achieved economic progress.¹

Clearly, access to postsecondary education is important, because there is a strong and positive association between education, participation in the labor force, and earnings. In addition, recent research shows that education is an investment that has significant societal as well as monetary returns, i.e., increased civic engagement, asset development, well-being in retirement, and reductions in public expenditures on social welfare programs.² The urgent need to increase human capital is driving the concern among policy analysts, educators, and workforce development specialists to improve access to education for the “disadvantaged,” i.e., people characterized as low-wage and unskilled workers, and/or people of color and recent immigrants.

Women and Economic Inequity

Women—especially women of color—face *additional* barriers to economic advancement. Typically, they experience structural pay inequities and disproportionate parental responsibilities; many times they also have to overcome histories of violence, illness, discrimination, and poverty. The structural pay inequities are apparent in the continuing wage gap between the average earnings of men and women. That wage gap now stands at 23 percent,³ i.e., for every dollar a man earns a woman earns 77 cents, *regardless of educational level*. Added to this is a continuing wage gap based on race,

ethnicity, and nativity. For example, the average earnings of women of color and immigrants are even lower than those of white women with equivalent levels of education. According to the 2000 Census, the median income for men with associate (AA) degrees was \$38,400, compared to \$28,800 for white women, \$27,400 for Hispanic women, \$27,000 for black women,⁴ and \$20,600 for foreign-born women.⁵

These findings underscore the fact that women need access to education not only to raise their earnings. They also need more education than men

to achieve pay parity because, if women’s earnings are less than men’s for the same level of education, women as a whole will need to gain more education to bring their median earnings closer to those of men.

Another important consideration in improving access to education for women is the distinct intergenerational advantage accruing to the children of educated mothers, since research shows that there is a strong and positive association between the mothers’ education level and their children’s educational performance.⁶

Yet, in spite of the widespread consensus on the importance of expanding educational access, and the initiation of significant college-access initiatives for first-generation learners,⁷ low-income students, and students of color, many low-income women continue to face major barriers in their efforts to secure education, particularly postsecondary education. This is especially true for women whose families receive public assistance (or “welfare”) after the major federal and state welfare changes enacted in the mid-1990s.⁸

In spite of the widespread consensus on the importance of expanding educational access, and the initiation of significant college-access initiatives for first-generation learners, low-income students, and students of color, many low-income women continue to face major barriers in their efforts to secure education, particularly postsecondary education. This is especially true for women whose families receive public assistance (or “welfare”) after the major federal and state welfare changes enacted in the mid-1990s.

Federal and State Policies Affecting Low-Income Women's Access to Education

Federal Welfare Policy, 1996

In 1996, Congress enacted the Public Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) “to change welfare as we know it.”⁹ PRWORA changed the name of cash benefits from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), replaced the lifetime entitlement to cash benefits with a five-year lifetime limit, and shifted the programmatic focus from a human capital approach—which encouraged education and training—to a “work first” approach that steered recipients directly into jobs. “Work first” is based on the premise that low-level, low-wage jobs inevitably lead to better-paying and more stable employment.¹⁰

This policy was reinforced by the actions of other federal agencies, notably the Department of Labor (DOL). In 1997, DOL enacted the Welfare-to-Work Act, allocating two billion dollars over a three-year period for education and training programs to assist low-skilled people who were already in the workforce. In 1998, DOL enacted the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to replace the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program, eliminated some programs directed specifically at women, e.g., “displaced homemakers,” and consolidated many other employment and training programs.

WIA identified three major client groups: youth, displaced workers, and disadvantaged workers, and three tiers of services: core (initial assessments and information), intensive (comprehensive assessments and case management), and training (on-the-job and job readiness). The majority of the WIA “disadvantaged” workers are low-income women, many of whom have employment histories and needs similar to those of welfare recipients, and in some states WIA agencies co-located their services with welfare agencies and intermingled DTA and WIA clients. Recent research based on national data shows that workers received more tier-one and tier-two services and fewer tier-three services (training) under WIA than they received under the previous JTPA Program.¹¹

State Welfare Policy, 1996

Massachusetts’ welfare policy (known as Chapter 5) was enacted in 1995. Unlike PRWORA, which established a lifetime limit of 60 months for families receiving benefits, the Massachusetts policy’s time limit on cash benefits is twenty-four months of benefits within a five-year period.¹² Chapter 5 also changed the name of the cash benefits in Massachusetts from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC), and changed the name of the state agency from the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). In addition, the state not only anticipated PRWORA’s restrictions on educational access, it went even further. Under Chapter 5, women with children over the age of 6 who had to fulfill a twenty-hour weekly work requirement were not permitted to engage in any form of education (including adult basic education and English-language classes) to meet these requirements. Instead, short-term “soft skills” classes, such as résumé writing, interview skills, and structured job searches, became the primary options for women receiving welfare benefits.¹³

A review of Massachusetts welfare and workforce development policies shows that Massachusetts was one of the few states to embrace “work first” as its primary strategy. It also has one of the least integrated service delivery systems.¹⁴ Welfare recipients receive services that are paid for out of different funding streams.¹⁵ Research studies have found that Massachusetts WIA participants have not benefited as much as those in other states from tier-three services; in 2003 only 24 percent of the caseloads were provided with training, compared to the national average of 36 percent. In fact, DTA provides funds to the WIA career centers to deliver tier-one services, i.e., job searches, to DTA clients.

The effects of Chapter 5 were immediate and dramatic. Almost overnight, Massachusetts welfare policies on access to education and training went from being some of the most permissive in the country to the most restrictive, and within two years the number of welfare recipients enrolled in the fifteen state community colleges fell from over 7,400 to 3,900.¹⁶

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Changes in Massachusetts Welfare Statutes, 2003–2004

Between 1996 and 2003, educators, workforce development leaders, welfare reform advocates, and others attempted to pass legislative and budget amendments to allow education and training to count toward the work requirement. In January 1996, educators, college administrators, low-income women, researchers, and advocates formed a coalition known as the Welfare, Education, Training Access Coalition (WETAC) whose objective was to advocate for changes in the welfare statutes that would provide opportunities for education and training.¹⁷ In summer 1998, statewide organizing took place in anticipation of the first benefit cut-offs in December; a conference to examine the effects of welfare policy was held at Northeastern University; and the Family Economic Initiative (FEI) was formed to monitor state welfare policies. College presidents, city mayors, legislators, groups representing workforce development programs, unions, and immigrant organizations provided testimony at legislative and budget hearings. In 2001, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay published a joint report that concluded that education and training were to be encouraged.¹⁸ These efforts gained legislative support and resulted in changes in 2003 to the statute (Chapter 5) and DTA regulations.

In 2003, for the first time mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 6 (a formerly exempt group) became subject to the work requirement; they were the first group to be allowed to meet the requirement “through *Department-approved education or training activities* in addition to employment or community service.”¹⁹ In addition, DTA permitted recipients to apply for, and receive, up to two three-month extensions to their time limits to allow them to complete education and training activities. A DTA field operations memorandum states that permissible activities include those:

- Paid for by Employment Services Program (ESP) funds (job searches)
- Courses that are *not* paid for by DTA, e.g., community-college courses, adult basic education, and

In 2003, for the first time mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 6 (a formerly exempt group) became subject to the work requirement; they were the first group to be allowed to meet the requirement “through *Department-approved education or training activities* in addition to employment or community service.”

GED, as long as they “are designed to prepare a recipient for a specific type of occupation.”²⁰ (Welfare recipients, like other low-income students, must meet their education costs through Pell Grants, work-study, loans, and scholarships.)²¹

In 2004, DTA allowed *all* welfare recipients who were required to meet the work requirement to count education as a work activity *for up to twelve months*. However, DTA *also increased the number of mandatory work hours*. Thus, women with children between the ages of 6 and 9 had their hours increased to twenty-eight, and women

with children ages 9 and older had their hours increased to thirty. Also, women could apply for childcare and transportation benefits to assist their participation in education activities as long as they

- Did not exceed twelve months
- Did not exceed work toward an associate degree
- Equaled or exceeded a half-time educational program
- Were included in an approved Employment Development Plan (EDP)²²

The 2004 changes to the state regulations included a statement that participation criteria for “postsecondary vocational training” should include

- At least 12 hours of activity every week
- Attendance of at least 75 percent of the actual scheduled hours per week
- Satisfactory progress as defined *by the provider* (emphasis added)²³

In May 2006, DTA released a longer and more detailed Field Operations Memorandum that defined the full range of work activities and clarified the TAFDC population that would best be served by each work activity.²⁴ This memorandum included two new groups of recipients who had to comply with the work requirements (immigrants who needed English-language skills and recipients with disabilities); clarified the availability of transportation benefits; and added preparing for the GED test as an acceptable work activity. *However, this memorandum—widely circulated to DTA caseworkers—referred only to ESP programs that were paid for by DTA and excluded*

previous reminders that women could participate in educational activities that were funded through other sources, e.g., Pell Grants, loans, state scholarships, state-funded Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, and workforce development funds.²⁵ Since caseworkers receive numerous field memoranda it is highly likely they will forget some of these details unless they receive full and complete reminders of the regulations.

PRWORA Reauthorized in 2006

The enactment of the Deficit Reduction Act in 2006 reauthorized PRWORA for five additional years. The federal government's goal was to reduce the number of recipients who were exempt (because of illness, disability, or the age of their children), and the required caseload participation rate was increased to 50 percent, with an additional 5 percent increase each year through 2010. Since Massachusetts had granted exemptions (some of which were temporary) to mothers with disabilities and chronic illnesses, to mothers with disabled and chronically ill children, and to mothers with children under 2 years of age, these changes are likely to have a substantial effect on the Massachusetts caseload and the work requirements. It is difficult to anticipate the full impact of these changes, but it is likely that a window of opportunity exists for expanding participation through increasing participation in education.²⁶

Effective implementation of complex and changing policies is a significant challenge to state agencies. The policies require that:

1. Welfare recipients are fully informed of their options and have access to supports that enable them to take advantage of their options.
2. Top welfare administrators provide clear directives to field offices and individual caseworkers.
3. Welfare caseworkers have "on-the-ground" knowledge of participants' circumstances and sufficient flexibility to respond to their circumstances.
4. Administrators in the agencies providing resources to welfare recipients are knowledgeable about the policies and the circumstances of the recipients and have sufficient resources to assist them.

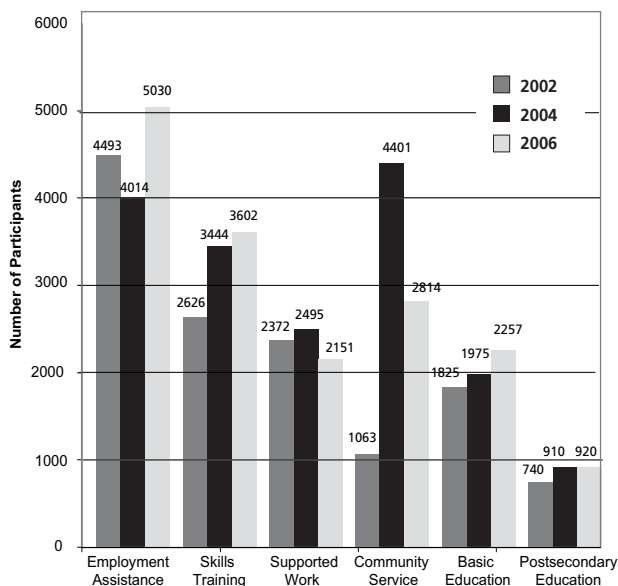
The research described in this report examines the implementation of these policies in a case-study of three Boston neighborhoods. However, prior to considering the study and its findings it is important to place it in a larger context.

The Larger Context: A Review of Statewide Participation in DTA Work Activities, 2002–2006

In order to provide a larger context for the case-study, we examined statewide data on the work activities of TAFDC participants for each year in the period under discussion—prior to, and following, the 2003 and 2004 statute changes.

Certainly, as Figure 1 shows, women participated in educational activities in 2002, before the new statute took effect. At that point they were still exempt from the work requirement if their youngest child was under the age of 6, and their activities would be recorded because they received childcare benefits in order to attend school. Figure 1 shows the numbers participating in all major work activities: Employment Assistance (job searches), Skills Training, Supported Work, Community Service, Basic Education, and Postsecondary Education. The data on work activities in the 2002–2006 period reveal that the greatest number of participants was consistently in the job search category and the fewest number of participants was in education, particularly in postsecondary education.

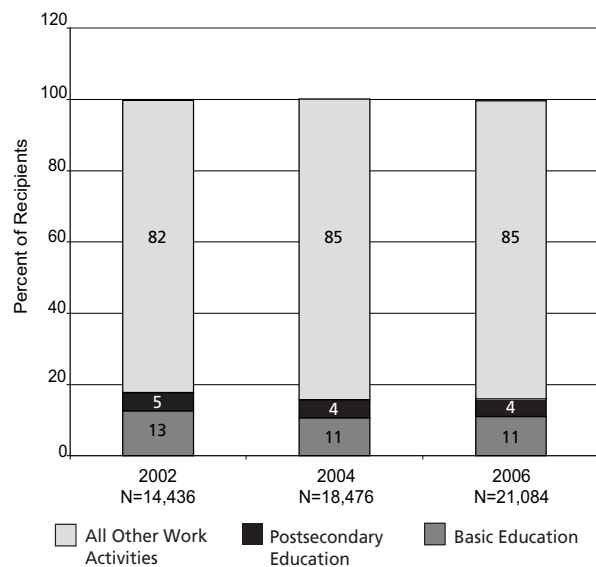
FIGURE 1
Massachusetts Welfare Recipients in Approved Work Activities, 2002, 2004, 2006



Source: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, 2006

While the overall number of participants in basic education and postsecondary education increased slightly between 2002 and 2006, Figure 2 shows that the overall percentage in relation to the caseload actually *declined*—from 18 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2006.

FIGURE 2
Welfare Recipients in Education, 2002, 2004, 2006

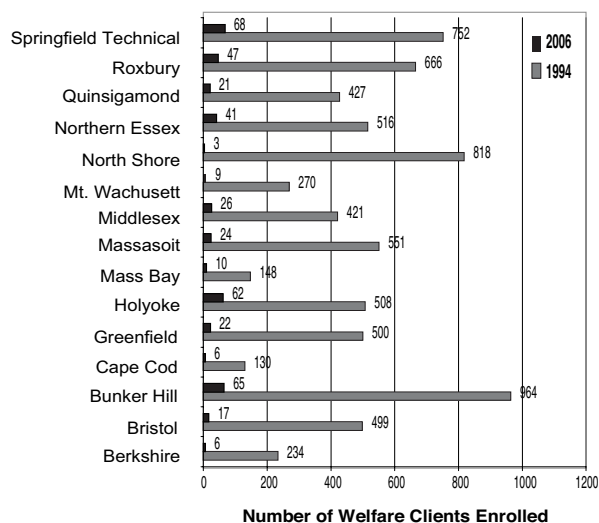


Source: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, 2006

A second major finding emerged from a review of the types of educational institutions in which TAFDC clients were enrolled. Over 900 women were enrolled in public and private, two-year and four-year institutions of higher education.

Finally, when the enrollments in community colleges in 2006 are compared with those in 1994, *the total number of welfare recipients in community colleges in 2006 was equal to the number in a single college in 1994.* (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3
Massachusetts Welfare Client Enrollments in Community Colleges, Pre- and Post-1996 Welfare Policy



Sources: The Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office, 1996, and Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, 2006

A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL ACCESS IN BOSTON

Research Goals and Basic Premises

The purpose of the research project described here was to determine whether women knew about and took advantage of the revised statutes permitting education and training to “count” for the work requirement and, equally important, to learn whether women were able to take advantage of the revised policy.

For the purpose of this study, “substantive education” is defined as a continuum that includes adult basic education, English-language, pre-college preparation courses, vocational certificates, and postsecondary education.

We define “access” as the ability to move smoothly from each “point” on this continuum to the next. For example, an immigrant might begin with a course on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL or ESOL) and, depending on her previous education, would either continue in a degree course or participate in further adult education and college preparation courses.

“Access” also means knowing

about and utilizing the

resources to apply to, enroll in,

and complete these educational

activities. Such resources com-

prise those that are directly

related to the education

process, including knowledge of

eligibility criteria, application

processes, sources of financial

aid, curriculum choices, career opportunities, and

support services to make education participation a

reality, such as transportation and childcare.

Case-Study Research Design

The research took place in three low-income Boston neighborhoods—Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan—where a sizable proportion of the population lives in poverty and a disproportionate number is likely to have experienced the effects of the welfare policy. We decided to focus on these neighborhoods because recent research shows that although there are more white welfare recipients, a greater proportion of women of color remain on the welfare rolls and access to education and training is especially poor among African-Americans and Latinas.²⁷ The research used a case-study design to

obtain a systematic understanding of welfare policy implementation by incorporating the opinions and experiences of multiple stakeholders. The advantage of case-study research is that it is holistic and yields rich, in-depth information. It provides an excellent means of “uncovering” issues and, in cases when a research topic is relatively unexplored, helps to define key research questions. A disadvantage of case-study research is that the focus on a single “case” means that the data are not representative, so that the research findings cannot be applied directly to other communities or larger populations.²⁸

Research Methods

The data were collected through several methods, including review and analysis of administrative documents, statewide datasets, and personal and focus group interviews. Meetings in 2005 with low-income

women and administrators of a childcare center, welfare office, a career center, and a community-based program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, preceded and informed this study. These preliminary discussions provided material for developing the research proposal. In addition, the

research drew on an extensive

bibliography of materials on women’s economic status, public assistance, workforce development, and education compiled at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy.

Participatory Research Model

Researchers made extensive use of participatory research methods in planning and implementing the study. Participatory research refers to research studies that are shaped by people who are typically thought of as research “subjects.” Many low-income people and people of color are skeptical of researchers because once they have opened themselves up to questioning—often about difficult circumstances—they seldom receive information or feedback or see any tangible results from their efforts. Participatory

research helps to reduce this feeling of “objectification” and to minimize the social distance between the researchers and the “researched.” It is not only more respectful of the participants, it is also more productive; when people feel comfortable and view the research as relevant to their lives, they are more likely to participate and to provide reliable information. Low-income women who become involved in the development of research instruments (e.g., questionnaires and focus-group question guides) help to ensure the questions are tactful, the language is accessible, and the tone is respectful. A final benefit of participatory research is that training a group of low-income women to become “community researchers” enhances their skills and advances their educational and employment goals.²⁹

All phases of the research project—project planning, recruitment and training of community researchers, recruiting focus-group participants, conducting focus groups, writing research notes, and analysis and dissemination—were enhanced by the active participation of low-income women and women of color.

The Research Team and Planning Process

The project director³⁰ and six low-income women formed the planning team. Two women who spoke Haitian Creole had been student leaders at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB)—one in a low-income student resource center, the other in an African-American organization. One formerly was a homeless woman and a UMB student; another was a UMB employee with strong community ties to the Boston neighborhoods where the research was located; and two were graduate students (one at UMB and the other at Boston College). The UMass Boston graduate student also served as the project coordinator handling all the logistics of the project.

The initial project planning took place between December 2005 and February 2006. The project director and three members of the planning team became the workshop trainers; the UMB graduate student became the project coordinator responsible for training and focus group logistics; and three planners became community researchers. The planning team designed the workshop curriculum, developed infor-

Participatory research is not only more respectful of the participants, it is also more productive; when people feel comfortable and view the research as relevant to their lives, they are more likely to participate and to provide reliable information.

mational materials, designed group exercises, established guidelines, and drafted the research instruments.

Community Researcher Recruitment and Training

The project developed an extensive outreach effort to recruit community researchers using personal contacts, emails, and flyers; the planning group’s numerous work, community, neighborhood, cultural, and family networks assured the success of this effort. A large number of women applied, and twelve of them became community researchers (some of whom were also part of the planning team discussed above).

The first training workshop for community researchers began with an introduction to the research project, a brief history of welfare policies, and detailed information on the Massachusetts statutes informing the project. Community researchers signed agreements committing them to attend three training workshops, to recruit focus group participants, to lead one of the focus groups, and to write up notes based on the taped focus group meetings.

The focus group training sessions were held once a week in the evening. The Boston Pilot Middle School, Dorchester, provided a comfortable, convenient venue, with space adjacent to the meeting room for providing childcare. Two community researchers led each of the six focus groups that formed the heart of the study.

Focus Group Recruitment

Community researchers worked in pairs in a “buddy system,” recruiting focus group participants through their numerous social networks: posting flyers at work, in their neighborhoods, churches, and cultural organizations. There were three criteria for focus group participants: they had to live in Boston, have received TAFDC benefits at some point between 2003 and 2006, and have an interest in advancing their education. Flyers were posted in English and Spanish.

The Focus Groups

Six focus groups were held in May and June, 2006; five took place during one evening at the Boston Pilot Middle School, Dorchester, and one in a homeless shelter. Two focus groups were conducted primarily in

Spanish. All the women who responded to the flyers and personal invitations to become focus group participants had to first contact the project coordinator to confirm they met the project criteria. The coordinator briefed them on the project and on the procedures to ensure they understood the project's commitment to obtaining their informed consent and ensuring their confidentiality.³¹

The focus groups began with an informal registration period during which participants signed in, completed a brief questionnaire, signed consent forms, and ate a light meal with their children. After the children were placed in childcare, the mothers were assigned to their focus groups.

Each focus group was led by two community researchers, who were supervised by the more experienced project staff (trainers, coordinator, and director). On completion, focus group participants received \$20.00 gift certificates as acknowledgement of their time and effort, as well as reimbursement for public transportation.

Information Sources

Welfare Recipients

The information sources for this component of the research project were the thirty-four focus group participants. All met the criteria of residing in one of the three neighborhoods, being welfare recipients during the 2003-2006 period, and having an interest in advancing their education. The responses to the brief questionnaire showed that almost two-thirds of the women were between the ages of 19 and 29, and almost 30 percent were 30 years or older.³² Almost all participants were women of color, evenly divided between African-American and Latina, with half speaking primarily Spanish in the home (see Table 1). The majority of women had children who were 1 year old or younger and only two women had school-age children. All women had received TAFDC benefits since 2003 and half of them were currently receiving TAFDC. The length of time the women received TAFDC was almost evenly divided into three groups: those receiving it for six months or less, for between seven and twenty-four months, and for over twenty-four months. The women had received a wide range of benefits, with several receiving more than one benefit, e.g., TAFDC and food stamps (see Table 2). Over three-quarters of the women were unemployed, three had part-time jobs, and four had full-time jobs. Over

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants (N=34)

Age	Number	Percent
18 years and under	2	6.5
19-29 years	20	64.5
30-39 years	3	10.0
40-49 years	6	19.0
Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
African-American	15	48.5
Latina	15	48.5
Other	1	3.0
Primary Language Spoken at Home	Number	Percent
Spanish	13	43.0
English	15	50.0
Haitian	2	7.0
Number of Children	Number	Percent
1 child	12	48.0
2 children	4	16.0
3 children	4	16.0
4 or more children	5	20.0

Table 2. TAFDC Experience of Focus Group Participants

Years Families Received TAFDC	Number	
2003	9	
2004	9	
2005	18	
2006	17	
Months of TAFDC Benefits	Number	Percent
1-6	12	36
7-12	6	18
13-24	4	12
25 or more	11	33
Age of Youngest Child When Receiving TAFDC	Number	Percent
1 year or younger	11	61.0
2-5 years	5	22.0
6 years or older	2	17.0
Benefits Received	Number	
Food Stamps	22	
TAFDC	17	
WIC	12	
Section 8 Housing	7	
Employment	7	
Medicaid	6	
SSI	4	
Educational Aid	2	
Federal/State Housing	2	
Fuel Assistance	2	
Child Support	1	
Women's Employment	Number	Percent
Not employed	24	78.0
Employed less 20 hours	1	3.0
Employed 20-24 hours	2	6.0
Employed 35-40 hours	4	13.0

half of the women had attended school until they were 18 to 20 years old and the remainder, with the exception of one, had left school between the ages of 13 and 17 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Educational Experience of Focus Group Participants

Age Women Finished School	Number	Percent
Under 12 years	1	4.0
13-17 years	10	40.0
18-20 years	14	56.0

TAFDC Education Post- 2003	Number
ESOL	3
GED preparation	3
GED/H.S. Diploma	5
Vocational Training	3
Two-year College	1

Number of Women In Education	Number of Children
8	1 child
0	2 children
1	3 children
1	4 or more

Throughout this report the women participating in the six focus groups are referred to interchangeably as “women,” “focus group participants,” and “welfare recipients.” They were asked the following questions:

1. Everyone in this room has experience being on welfare. Let’s start by asking everyone what year did you receive welfare and what work activities did you do?
2. For those of you who attended school or some form of training, where did you go? What did you do? And what was that experience like for you?
3. Some of you (or most of you) did not participate in education while on welfare. Why was that?
4. On the whole, do you think your welfare work activities helped to prepare you for work?
5. Do you see yourself continuing your education?
6. If you could speak to politicians about people on welfare being able to attend school, what would you tell them?

Clearly, although these were the main questions posed, the community researchers facilitating the focus group discussions were trained to probe for information

about what the women knew about the changed statutes, how much information they were provided, and their overall experiences.

Administrators

Only the project director conducted the interviews with thirteen administrators. The administrators were chosen because they were directors of agencies and institutions that either served Boston residents or influenced policies affecting Boston residents. They included personnel from the central DTA agency and a local DTA office; workforce development specialists and academic directors at two-year colleges; administrators at a statewide educational agency; and administrators at career centers providing services to Boston residents (see Table 4).

Table 4. Administrator Interviews: Type/Number of Agencies and Personnel

Type of Agency	Number of Agencies	Number of Personnel
One-stop career centers	2	3
Two-year colleges	2	4
DTA central and local offices	2	4
Statewide educational agency	1	2
Total	7	13

Administrators responded to the following questions:

1. Do you think the 2003 and 2004 changes in DTA statutes to allow education and training to count for the work requirements were necessary?
2. Do you think recipients are taking advantage of that option? If yes, how? If no, why?
3. What is your role, if any, in disseminating knowledge about these options?
4. How do you think the 12-month rule is being interpreted “on the ground”?
5. How do you think the 20-, 24-, and 30-hour weekly work requirements are being implemented “on the ground”?
6. What more could be done, if anything, to disseminate information about these options?
7. How do you think the 2006 federal statutes requiring higher work participation rates will affect access to education and training?

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings presented here are based on the focus-group and administrator interviews; all quotes come directly from either the focus group participants or the administrators' interviews. No names are given to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Participation in Education

All the focus-group participants expressed a strong interest in education, a finding that is not surprising given that the recruitment process specifically sought women with such an interest. Some of the comments are, however, very telling about the depth of their interest and how education is related to the goals they have for themselves and their children. For example, one woman said, "I want more out of life." Another explained, "I would like something I can achieve by myself and that is for my children." Although some women had very specific ideas about the types of careers they wanted, such as teacher, paralegal, emergency medical technician (EMT), or medical secretary, others had more general goals, such as "studying business."

Yet the focus-group participants had very limited access to basic education. Although the majority of women were unemployed and had only one or two children, the number of women participating in any education programs—including adult basic education and English-language instruction—was minimal. Ten women were attending adult basic education and short-term training at sites that included a community college, proprietary college, district school, and several community-based organizations.³³ Although half of the women were not native-English speakers, only three were attending ESOL classes. Their access to postsecondary education was virtually non-existent; only four women had found their way to college, but of these, two had dropped out at the insistence of their caseworker and another had dropped out because she found it impossible to hold a thirty-hour job, care for her children, and go to school. Only one woman had completed a nine-month technical-training certificate program.

"I would like something I can achieve by myself and that is for my children."

Responses to the questions by focus groups and administrators revealed considerable overlap in their perceptions and opinions. In many cases they identified many similar barriers, spanning a wide range that included families' personal circumstances; lack of institutional resources; lack of understanding of the welfare statutes; lack of support services from welfare offices, educational institutions, and career centers; and lack of inter-agency collaboration.

Barriers

Personal and Family Problems

The focus-group participants discussed their disabilities and chronic health problems, and their children's chronic health issues; the latter included, for example, asthma and mental illnesses, as well as behavioral issues. Quotes from the women included:

I am in school but I have a learning disability and the going is slow.

When my kids are sick, I have to stay with them. I have no family to help me. So it's hard for me to hold a job or to be in an education program.

The DTA personnel recognized that some women are facing severe problems:

When we first implemented [the changes], the people who had the skills got off....We're dealing more with the hard core [cases]....We're dealing more with mental illness.... [But] we don't know [about that] unless something triggers [an episode]... We're not doctors...we refer to Mass. Rehab.

But the DTA personnel interviewed were the only group of respondents to claim that women lacked the personal motivation to participate in education:

Some of them do not take the program seriously enough. They see how long they can go without taking advantage [of options]...it's not until we take actions...and something is taken out of their grant or the case is closed [that clients participate].

Career center administrators recognized that having a job with shift changes and unpredictable hours or having a sick child affected a woman's capacity to work or go to school:

There was a mother with two young children. We went through a whole rigmarole to set her up for training...her child got sick and when she was ready to go back to training, she lost her childcare....She dropped out.

Lack of Options

The majority of focus-group participants stated emphatically that they felt that DTA caseworkers pushed them into any activity, regardless of their skills, interests, or backgrounds.

Or, if they were provided with education and training information, it was often erroneous and not helpful, e.g., the programs and courses were oversubscribed, cancelled, or otherwise unavailable; they also tended to lead to low-paying jobs with little room for advancement or financial gain, e.g., childcare certificates. *"They push you into anything for the numbers."*

None of the administrators had taken an active role in disseminating information to welfare recipients about their longer-term education options, although some had attempted to inform women about short-term courses. Although central office DTA administrators stated that they had updated their computer system to include a selection of short-term education and training options, the local DTA offices rarely provided direct outreach about these options. One DTA administrator explained that on the one occasion when her office sent out thirty letters about a specific program, only ten women signed up and only three took it. A college administrator stated that although her staff sometimes talked to the local DTA office, the college did not do any active outreach to recipients:

I don't see it as a defined part of my job. We don't do much recruiting, we don't need to. We get students by word of mouth, some ads, and [our umbrella agency's] tentacles.

The statewide educational agency administrators acknowledged that community colleges conduct outreach efforts:

[They] work out recruitment based on their relationships with the director. They recruit at vendor fairs. Some have recruiters who sit in DTA offices, some create flyers, some do mass mailings, some recruit through a housing agency.

We found, however, that the degree to which information is disseminated on all education options varies widely. For example, the administrator quoted above also said, *"Each campus has its own direct tie to the local DTA office."*

Career center administrators focused on disseminating information about resources to their "primary" clients, i.e., those referred for Workforce Investment Act services. Since those resources are scarce, the director of one center reported they were admitting only twenty-five from a large pool of applicants for weekly orientation sessions:

We don't want to get their hopes up and so we select carefully.... [We]

turn people down if there is no space, so technically there are no waiting lists.

Another career center administrator discussed how her staff had conducted outreach to clients from a local DTA office during a brief period when WIA funds were available, but had encountered resistance from the DTA caseworkers:

We made several presentations at [the DTA office]. That type of marketing should have worked. I don't know why the resistance was so great. We had lots of WIA dollars.

Lack of Childcare and Transportation

Many focus-group participants commented on their problematic experiences with childcare. One major problem was that they could not apply for childcare until they had jobs or were enrolled in education. Welfare recipients need to provide proof of employment before caseworkers will issue childcare vouch-

ers, but some caseworkers require more proof than others. For example, one woman reported that her caseworker made her show three pay stubs (instead of one) from her new job before she would issue her a childcare voucher.

You need childcare to apply for jobs.... [But] you have to be in a program or job to get a childcare voucher. [It's] unfair that you have to get a job before you can even fill out applications for childcare. If programs are full and you get a job, you have to tell your employer in the interview you are on welfare and need to get the job to get the childcare paperwork processed. Now the employer wonders if you will be able to get childcare and start. The system keeps you from succeeding while pointing out your status as a welfare recipient to everyone.

Focus-group participants appeared to be unaware that they could apply for childcare vouchers to cover their job search activities and they described sitting in rooms with their children, and waiting to use a single computer in order to search for jobs.

Education administrators acknowledged the significant difficulty of securing childcare, particularly in the evening:

Women with children have greater barriers. The reality is they cannot do it. Evening childcare is really problematic.... It would be great if they could drop off their kids and go to class in the evening.

Onerous Welfare Policies and Practices

Complicated verification procedures and paperwork make it difficult for women to go to work or school. Almost all of the focus-group participants found the DTA paperwork and verification requirements to be unduly restrictive, and the sanctions resulting from missed appointments and delays in producing documentation to be unnecessarily punitive, especially when compared to other agencies' practices. One woman with chronic health problems had to repeatedly provide doctors' notes to claim "good cause" for not participating in work activities, when it is likely she might have qualified for an exemption.

Focus-group participants appeared to be unaware that they could apply for childcare vouchers to cover their job search activities and they described sitting in rooms with their children, and waiting to use a single computer in order to search for jobs.

Having to report with doctors' [notes] every 30, 60, 90 days, plus other TAFDC appointments, means losing time at work and school.

Other women stated that verification could be simplified and made less intimidating:

Let people have their dignity and support them by allowing them to use phone conferences, faxes, and

other forms of verification just like everyone else in the business world. People on parole have fewer demands on them [than those on welfare].

Stop threatening us—every request for documentation is combined with "if we don't get the paperwork back by a specific date, you lose your benefits."...Stop allowing the welfare system to keep clients dependent with petty demands.

Administrators in both educational institutions and career centers agreed that welfare policies had not dramatically changed since the new statutes were enacted and they continued to create real barriers for women's access to education. One career center administrator stated: "*The behavior [of DTA] has not changed and the philosophy has not changed.*"

Another commented that this problem was compounded by the fact that "*Women never have an accurate count of the months [they have left in their time limits].*"

Educators found DTA's verification process of welfare recipients' school attendance to be onerous and troubling, since it set them apart from all other students, violated the confidentiality of their economic status, and was at odds with the general expectations for measuring progress used for other resources, such as Pell grants (i.e., a minimum GPA of 2.0). Colleges are perceived more as workforce development outlets working with short-term training funds than as certificate-and degree-granting institutions that can efficiently serve welfare recipients and other low-income students.

The programs we offer really struggle with how much they should offer. Some offer 5-6 weeks, others offer one semester. How much can you do in one semester? [But]...that's what DTA will pay for.

We've never been adequately funded to provide these workforce development services and to reach out.... DTA dictates the length of programs....It's a struggle for community colleges [because] those short programs are not good for our other students. (Statewide Educational Agency)

Negative Caseworker/Client Interactions

Often women perceived caseworkers as disapproving and unhelpful, and wished that welfare workers would be more understanding of their difficult circumstances:

Some people really need it... [they] come from a domestic violence situation and have to start all over....Families should not be in such a struggle to survive that they feel there is no hope.

Two women mentioned that a DTA caseworker had helped them, but in general the women agreed with one focus-group participant who stated that she “did not have a good thing to say about them.” The majority of women felt their caseworkers were intolerant of women with a history of family violence or chronic illness.

Most are judgmental. Workers don't want you to get ahead. ... [They should] stop lumping everyone together and realize that some of us are moving faster than others and should be supported instead of held back.

Although the statutes and regulations provide caseworkers with some flexibility in their dealings with clients, their day-to-day interactions with them reveal few efforts to accommodate the women's personal and family circumstances. Moreover, several women commented that although they were required to check in with their caseworkers, the caseworkers seldom returned their calls, and often their voice-mail boxes did not accept messages.

Inadequate Dissemination of Critical Information

The language in the DTA protocols circulated to local offices, which were reviewed as part of this study, does not emphasize sufficiently that welfare recipients can engage in community-college courses. The language “Department-approved educational activities” leads many administrators—DTA and others—to believe erroneously that it refers only to activities DTA pays for through ESP funds. In the rare instances when women were enrolled in community colleges, they were stopped from continuing by caseworkers who, if they had been better informed about DTA statutes, might have suggested that the women apply for extensions or financial aid, and thus would not have had to drop out.

Certainly none of the welfare caseworkers interviewed for this study seemed to know that attendance at a four-year college is feasible for some women who do not have to meet the work requirements and who do not need to apply for DTA childcare.

Limited Interpretations of the 12-Month Rule

Neither the operational memoranda sent to regional DTA directors, nor the notifications sent directly to recipients provide consistent information on how “twelve months” is defined, nor that “education” can include any certified course of higher education leading to a likely area of employment in Massachusetts. The local DTA administrators interviewed for this study were not certain about the correct interpretation of their agency's twelve-month participation rule, i.e., whether it is a calendar year or fifty-two semester weeks, or whether they have to be consecutive or non-consecutive weeks, and they often misinform the recipients. Career center administrators did not seem to understand fully the DTA statutes or how to interpret them, and in one case an administrator was unclear about the Massachusetts time-limit policy on TAFDC benefits.

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Restrictive Interpretation of the 20-, 24-, and 30-Hour Work Requirements

No college course load can meet even the minimum DTA weekly requirement of twenty hours, let alone twenty-eight or thirty hours. A full-time college course-load requires 12–15 classroom hours a week, and even many skills training courses are only 20–24 hours a week. Women are seldom informed that travel time and extra hours spent in labs and studying can count at DTA's discretion, and instead they have to take on extra jobs to make up the hours. DTA's policy of permitting study time to count only when in a supervised college setting is likely a breach of the law assuring the confidentiality of the students' financial status.³⁴ The administrators interviewed for this study were unaware that DTA statutes provide some flexibility; for example, the statute requires only 75 percent attendance by recipients and daily travel time (to college, work, or childcare) can be counted as meeting the work requirement.

Lack of Interaction between Agencies

It is important to note, however, that *none of the focus group participants discussed receiving active encouragement from agencies, such as one-stop career centers, or active outreach from colleges.* The career centers' policies and practices compound the difficulties women experience with the welfare offices. These agencies appear to be either unable or unwilling to provide welfare recipients with education and training, or to refer them to jobs offering education and training opportunities.

College administrators who participated in the study indicated that they do not reach out to DTA offices because they perceive that DTA is only interested in working directly with the few campuses implementing the short-term *Education-that-Works* program. These administrators also acknowledge the lack of childcare availability for women attending orientation sessions and the lack of funded slots providing welfare recipients with orientation to programs funded with WIA funds. The scarcity of DTA resources and WIA slots results in colleges and

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These agencies appear to be either unable or unwilling to provide welfare recipients with education and training, or to refer them to jobs offering education and training opportunities.

agencies competing for access to clients. One college administrator stated that he believes he is sometimes excluded from vendor fairs because of competition between community-based and community college programs.

One career center administrator with "bonus" WIA funds found that DTA workers resisted her agency's outreach efforts to refer

clients. Although welfare recipients meet the criteria for at least one of the career center's target populations (the "economically disadvantaged and unskilled"), the center is more likely to provide the women only with job search services (for which they are reimbursed by DTA) rather than with other resources.

Promising Opportunities

While the above findings reflect the experiences and opinions of the women interviewed for this study, some of the women mentioned ways in which low-income women had been helped in their quest for education. The following are examples of positive practices experienced by some of the interviewees:

1. Staff in homeless shelters, libraries, and training programs offered helpful advice and information to welfare recipients.
2. Friends and peers shared information about useful programs.
3. Staff in the Departments of Rehabilitation and Mental Health brought their clients to colleges to learn firsthand about educational programs.
4. Peer tutors at an intensive learning center at one college provided low-income students with English-language and academic assistance, information about financial aid, and other educational resources.
5. Church ministers in some congregations took the lead in encouraging women members to move forward with their educations.
6. A peer network traded evening childcare at a two-year college.
7. Two former students of one college created a business providing evening childcare to the children of current students.

8. Mid-range educational programs (four to seven months) offered by community colleges provided opportunities for women (and their children) to become familiar with college campuses and educational opportunities. These will increase the likelihood of continuing enrollment of women.
9. Colleges tailor course schedules to meet the work participation requirements and local public transportation timetables.
10. DTA offices are planning orientation sessions on approved activities at DTA offices to boost client participation rates because of the 2006 increased work participation requirements.

Summary of Research Findings

The results provide an in-depth look at the experiences and perceptions of a relatively small number of women in a geographically limited area of Boston. They show that during the 2003-2006 time period covered by the study:

- Only one-third of the women had participated in Adult Basic Education courses in spite of the fact that the majority had a single child, and were unemployed, and almost half needed to improve their English-language skills.
- Those women who participated in basic education had found their way to a variety of institutions—proprietary, community college, school district, community-based, and employers—usually through the advice of friends, ministers, homeless shelter personnel, and occasionally through a DTA caseworker.
- Focus group participants and welfare, educational, and workforce development administrators identify similar and significant barriers to access to substantive education activities for welfare recipients in the three Boston neighborhoods. The DTA personnel interviewed for this study, however, tend to focus on motivational barriers more than the other administrators.
- The statewide data referred to earlier in the report show that in other parts of the state over 900 women were enrolled in public and private, and two-year and

four-year institutions of higher education. However, of the four women in the focus groups who had enrolled in postsecondary community college courses, two were told to stop by their caseworkers for reasons that did not appear to comply with DTA's written policies, one dropped out because she had attempted to combine a full-time job with education, and the fourth completed a certificate course.

Simply stated, both the focus groups and the statewide data show no increase in the percentage of women engaged in educational activities since the 2003 and 2004 statute changes, either in the Boston neighborhoods included in this study or in the statewide population. Moreover, it appears that women in the Boston neighborhoods had less access to postsecondary education than women in other parts of the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following “broad brush” recommendations are intended to serve as guidelines for developing detailed strategies to improve access to education for welfare recipients. In general, more emphasis needs to be placed on the concerns of *low-wage women and single mothers* who bear the extra burdens of child-rearing in their quest for education and jobs with career ladders. Some of the following suggestions are appropriate for many low-income and disadvantaged students.

DTA

- DTA should think creatively about increasing participation rates to meet federal requirements through education and training activities; should include the use of state funds for activities not “counted” by the federal Health and Human Services Administration; and should review other states’ practices, using state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds to provide services that need not conform to federal policies. For example, the Parents as Scholars Program in Maine provides the opportunity for all income-eligible women (not only welfare recipients) to apply for funds equivalent to welfare benefits, allowing them to attend college.³⁵
- DTA should consider extending the time allowed to attend postsecondary education activities from 12 to 24 months, and not count the time spent in ABE activities against them.
- DTA should take primary responsibility in disseminating *clear, comprehensive, and consistent* information to all levels of staff, their clients, and other agencies. Such information should include:
 - Descriptions of the specific types of courses that “count” as education and training, particularly postsecondary education
 - Lists of two- and four-year colleges and universities that have enrolled welfare recipients
 - Lists of agencies, institutes, and colleges supplying financial aid and application resources
 - How to take effective advantage of 52 weeks of eligibility (i.e., up to 3.5 semesters)

- How to apply for three-month extensions
- DTA childcare eligibility for women in education and training
- DTA childcare resources, including transitional childcare for clients who no longer collect TAFDC
- DTA administrators should create strategies for disseminating information to their clients at a variety of community venues, collaborating with libraries, churches, homeless shelters, and cultural agencies to ensure broad and effective outreach.
- DTA should “count” the time spent on travel to school and childcare, study time, labs, student organizations, and student governance as meeting the work requirements.
- DTA should accept the measurement of their clients’ attendance and progress in school in the same ways as other students who receive financial aid through loans and Pell grants (minimum GPA of 2.0 or 2.5).³⁶

Career Centers

- Career centers should regard welfare recipients as legitimate clients for all their services, whether or not they are referred by DTA for job searches.
- Career centers’ orientation and information sessions should be expanded to accommodate all clients and they should incorporate a child-friendly environment or drop-in center.
- Career centers should provide information to clients about education and training and note the employers that offer continuing education and training opportunities.

Colleges

- Many of the colleges with extensive internal and external collaboration networks and linkages to improve ABE access within their local communities should extend them to include more proactive recruitment methods for welfare recipients.³⁷

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- Colleges that have developed ways of assisting welfare recipients and other low-income students through raising funds for counseling, childcare, and other resources should be invited to share their experiences with other colleges and service providers.³⁸
 - Colleges can assist students in creating or sustaining supportive peer networks.³⁹
 - Colleges should appoint personnel to act as liaisons with DTA agencies and career centers to ensure that women have an advocate who has full information about educational resources.
 - College institutional research staff should develop indicators on the enrollment, retention, and careers of low-income women students with dependent children and should monitor these trends.⁴⁰

Non-Profit Agencies (including cultural centers and churches)

- Non-profit organizations and networks should be provided with resources to utilize peer networks to provide information—on campuses, at one-stop centers, WIC, and other agency offices.
- Non-profit agencies and community organizations in contact with low-income families should develop more proactive methods to press for better educational access for low-income women and to provide information about programs and resources.
- Funding should be allocated to low-income women's groups and community-based agencies to provide women with training in effective outreach methods and access to materials to encourage peer group information dissemination.

State Agency Collaboration

- Statewide and local oversight committees should ensure that participants bring all relevant voices to the table, including women with relevant experience in accessing education as low-income single parents.

Monitoring/Research

- Resources should be made available to an independent research entity to conduct and develop key indicators to measure progress in low-income women's access to education and their outcomes.
- Extend the case-study to a statewide review of policies and practices, and identify promising models.
- Build in regular reviews and reporting of DTA data on all work activities; conduct longitudinal studies on a sample of the DTA caseload to monitor client progress.
- Build in regular reviews of (1) career center data to determine the DTA caseload; (2) training referrals for all women clients; and (3) jobs providing education and training opportunities.
- A comparative economic analysis should be undertaken of the likely economic costs and consequences of increasing educational access to a cohort of welfare recipients and non-welfare recipients engaged in education.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Jared Bernstein, et al., *Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends* (Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2000).
- ² Robert Haveman, Andrew Bershadker, and Jonathan A. Schwabish, *Human Capital in the United States from 1975-2000* (Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2003); Thomas Shapiro and Edward N. Wolff, eds., *Assets for the Poor: The Benefits of Spreading Asset Ownership* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001).
- ³ Evelyn Murphy, with E.J. Graff, *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men—And What To Do About It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 3.
- ⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, Earnings in 1999 by Educational Attainment for People 18 Years Old and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000).
- ⁵ Andrew Sum and Neal Fogg, *The Changing Workforce: Immigrants in the New Economy* (Boston: MassINC, 1999), Table 5.8, 74-75.
- ⁶ S. Smith, ed., *Two-Generation Programs for Families in Poverty: A New Intervention Strategy* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1995).
- ⁷ Since 2000, the Lumina, Jack Kent Cooke, and Nellie Mae Foundations have launched substantial initiatives to address college access.
- ⁸ A welfare recipient may claim childcare benefits to pursue education and training. In some, but not all, instances it includes a statement in her Employment Services Plan (ESP), although some women enter education programs as “self-initiated” participants. Welfare recipients, like all low-income students, pay for their college expenses entirely through Pell grants, state scholarships, and loans.
- ⁹ As President Bill Clinton stated when giving his State of the Union Address before Congress, February 17, 1993.
- ¹⁰ This premise has not been borne out by evidence, since a substantial percentage of welfare recipients have work experience and there are no reliable data showing that entry-level jobs lead to sustainable wages. On the contrary, pre-PRWORA data showed that former welfare recipients' hourly wages increased only from \$6.07 to \$6.72 after twelve years. See Julie Strawn, *Beyond Job Search or Basic Education: Rethinking the Role of Skills in Welfare Reform* (Washington DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 1998).
- ¹¹ Abbey Frank, Hedieh Rahmanou, and Steve Savner, *The Workforce Investment Act: A First Look at Participation, Demographics, and Services* (Washington, D.C: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2003).
- ¹² This means that Massachusetts families were among the first in the U.S. to experience the expiration of their benefits in 1998.
- ¹³ Women with children less than 6 years of age are not subject to the twenty-hour work requirement and theoretically can engage in education.
- ¹⁴ Norton Grubb, et al., *Toward Order from Chaos: State Efforts to Reform Workforce Development Systems* (Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, 1999).
- ¹⁵ “Services Provided to Customers at Massachusetts One-Stop Career Centers in Fiscal Year, 2003,” Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training Caseload Report, 2003.
- ¹⁶ See Erika Kates, *Closing Doors: Declining Opportunities in Education for Low-income Women* (Welfare Education Training Access Coalition, Heller School, Brandeis University, 1998). Unfortunately, it is not possible to keep track of welfare recipients in college since the federal financial aid form (FAFSA) no longer includes a line item for welfare benefits as a source of income.
- ¹⁷ Erika Kates was a co-founder and executive director of WETAC.
- ¹⁸ *Off Welfare...On to Independence* (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, 2001).
- ¹⁹ DTA Field Operation Memo 2003-21, August 2003, provided by DTA.
- ²⁰ DTA Revised Employment Services Program Statute, Chapter 107, p. 207.140; provided by DTA.
- ²¹ It is often assumed that welfare recipients receive TAFDC benefits that pay for postsecondary education, but this is seldom the case.

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- ²² DTA Field Operation Memo 2004-27, July 19, 2004, provided by DTA.
- ²³ State Regulations 106. CMR, revised January 2004.
- ²⁴ DTA Field Operations Memo 2006-22A, May 25, 2006, provided by DTA.
- ²⁵ The Massachusetts Department of Education administers an extensive ABE program that is supplemented by many community-based programs financed by different funding streams. A study by Martin Liebowitz provides detailed information on the financing and administration of ABE programs in *Adult Education and Literacy in Community Colleges in Massachusetts: A Case-Study for the Advancement of Adult Literacy* (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2004).
- ²⁶ The Welfare Reform Advisory Committee convened by DTA Commissioner John Wagner in 2004 undertook an extensive review of the likely effect of federal reauthorization on Massachusetts welfare policies. See *A Report to the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance: Recommendations Post-Waiver and in Anticipation of the Reauthorization by the Congress of the United States of PRWORA*.
- ²⁷ Sara Goldrick-Rabb and Kathleen Shaw, "Racial and Ethnic Differences in the Impact of Work-First Policies on College Access," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter 2005): 291-307; Sheila Zedlewski and Donald Alderson, *Before and After Reform: How Have Families on Welfare Changed?* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2001).
- ²⁸ Sharran B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998).
- ²⁹ Also known as "empowerment evaluation." For example, see David Fetterman, Shakeh Kaftarian, and Abraham Wandersman, eds., *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996); Kates also conducted an earlier study using participatory methods with low-income women in *Boarding Up the Windows: The Effects of Welfare Reform on Twenty Low-Income Families in Boston* (Welfare Education Training Access Coalition, Heller School, Brandeis University, 2000).
- ³⁰ Erika Kates, the project director, serves as Research Director at the McCormack Graduate School's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy.
- ³¹ The research director cleared the research protocols with the UMB Institutional Review Board.
- ³² Not all the women answered all of the questions.
- ³³ The specific sites women attended included: Massachusetts General Hospital's job training program for data entry; Partners HealthCare training program; Burdett Business School; West Roxbury High School; Boston Career Institute; Academy Learning, Fall River, a homeless shelter; *Women Unite* Learning Center; Roxbury Community College; Career Link; and Dorchester House.
- ³⁴ The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act of 1974 (Buckley Amendment) guarantees the confidentiality of students' financial, medical, and academic status.
- ³⁵ Rebekah Smith, Luisa Deprez, and Sandra Butler, *Parents as Scholars: Education That Works* (Augusta, ME: Maine Equal Justice Partners, 2002).
- ³⁶ The official federal Pell grant GPA requirement is 2.0, but institutions can set their own standards, and some opt for 2.5.
- ³⁷ Martin Liebowitz provides detailed examples of these networks in *Adult Education and Literacy in Community Colleges in Massachusetts: A Case-Study for the Advancement of Adult Literacy* (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, New York, 2004).
- ³⁸ A study by the author in 2003 showed that Greenfield Community College raised funds for extra resources; and that the College of Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts Boston worked closely with community-based programs offering extra support for welfare recipients.
- ³⁹ Previous studies conducted by the author show that one of the most effective retention methods is to encourage students to form peer support networks by providing a common meeting space.
- ⁴⁰ The Institutional Research Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston assisted the author in developing such an indicator using existing university data.

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Daphnie Armand	Planner and Community Researcher
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For more information, please contact:

Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy

McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393

PH: 617.287.5541 • FAX: 617.287.5544
E-mail: cwppp@umb.edu • www.mccormack.umb.edu/cwppp