

WELFARE REFORM COMMUNITY FORUMS

December 1996

INTRODUCTION

This material was prepared for a series of statewide community forums on welfare reform in December 1996, which will be followed with additional forums in 1997. The Department of Human Services wants to thank all of those who attend or participate in the meetings. A special thanks goes to the community organizations and other agencies that helped co-sponsor or facilitate the forums.

There are 3 primary purposes for the December forums.

- Provide information about the new federal welfare reform law and some of the major impacts on Iowa.
- Discuss the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Plan that Iowa submitted in response to the federal law and gather input on the State Plan.
- Begin an ongoing process with the community to work together to help individuals reach self-sufficiency.

The last goal of mobilizing the community was created by a work group of individuals from community organizations, different counties, and state agencies. This may be one of the more important things that can result from these forums. There is a growing recognition and desire among many citizens and policy-makers to find ways to better involve the community. It is important that as we think about the needs of families and children during the welfare reform process, we also think about the increasing roles and expectations being placed on states and communities.

A "one-size-fits-all" approach will not work for all families, and since there are different strengths and opportunities and barriers in different areas of the state, some approaches need to be tailored to communities, allowing them to build on their strengths and assets. Communities may be defined as counties or cities or neighborhoods or some other association of individuals. Ways that communities can help include: advocating for low-income Iowans; providing mentoring to families or individuals on public assistance; helping establish adequate networks of services such as child care, transportation, and counseling; and promoting economic development and job opportunities that will benefit all members of the community.

There are many fine examples of communities already doing this in Iowa, and a lot of the success we have had in helping families and children is because of those community efforts. The Department of Human Services wants to build on those successes in partnership with communities to help people on welfare reach their full potential and become self-sufficient. The Department of Human Services is starting in December by trying to provide a base of information and by opening the door for further discussions with communities.

At the December forums, as much input as communities are prepared to give and time allows will be gathered. Input will also be accepted after this forum. The December forums will not make anyone an expert on welfare reform. However, the forums are intended to increase awareness of welfare reform. In early 1997 the dialogues will be continued, and the Department of Human Services will work with communities to begin thinking about the role of the state and of the community in how Iowa designs welfare reform in the future.

The December forums and future forums are an opportunity for recipients of public assistance, private businesspersons, community leaders, service providers, and concerned citizens to speak to how Iowa should deliver welfare reform. We encourage individuals to learn, to participate, or to follow up with someone after the forums, even during the coming months.

Concerns and suggestions provided at the December community forums across the state will be shared with the Council on Human Services, the Governor's Office, Legislators, other interested parties, and members of the public.

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING PUBLIC INPUT

In response to federal welfare reform, which became law in August 1996, and in response to the fact that Iowa's welfare reforms have now been in place 3 years (since October 1993), the Department of Human Services put in place a Welfare Reform Advisory Group. This Advisory Group is helping the Department of Human Services identify opportunities, challenges, solutions, and recommendations in how to best implement federal welfare reform and how Iowa's current welfare reforms might be changed to better help families move away from reliance on public assistance and towards self-sufficiency.

The Welfare Reform Advisory Group is made up of 32 people. Some of those are people who either receive help or have received help in the past from the programs included in the federal welfare reform law. The group also includes: legislators; representatives of county government; representatives from community-level service providers, the religious community, advocacy groups, and labor and business organizations; and representatives of several state agencies, including Human Services and Iowa Workforce Development staff who work directly with the programs and clients.

The Advisory Group started five work groups with the same kinds of people on them as are on the Advisory Group. The work groups are meeting regularly to look at issues and see if they can agree on recommendations to the Advisory Group about changes that should be made. The work groups are organized around the following issues:

Child Care

- Should changes be made in program structures, rules and payment rates?
- What are the opportunities to streamline and simplify the child care system?
- What can be done to increase accessibility to child care?

Work Participation

- What changes could be made to assist people to become employed and have a wage that would allow them to no longer need Family Investment Program assistance?
- What changes could be made to assist people to become employed and not only have a wage that would allow them to no longer need Family Investment Program, but at an income above the poverty level? (The poverty level for a family of 3 is \$12,980 annually.)
- What changes need to be made to meet the work requirements of the welfare reform law?
- What should be the role of post-secondary education and training in Iowa's welfare reform?

Incentives and Sanctions --The welfare reform law places a lot of expectations on public assistance recipients and requires a lot of sanctions for those who do not meet the expectations. However, the law does allow some flexibility in what the sanctions should look like.

- What options make the most sense for Iowa?
- What incentives are most effective at moving individuals into work?
- Is there an adequate balance of sanctions and incentives?
- Should Iowa's current incentives and sanctions be revised?

Implementation Process -- This work group already has provided recommendations about when to begin the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families Block Grant in Iowa. This group will also answer questions such as:

- What should Iowa do about its current control groups and waivers of federal rules?
- What about major policy options in the federal law that might require either legislative action or that might be of interest to Iowa in general?

Community Development -- This group has already made recommendations to the Welfare Reform Advisory Group and the Department of Human Services about the structure of these community forums and the need to have an effective community dialogue. Questions include:

- What are the potential impacts and big issues for communities?
- What should or can the role of communities be in welfare reform?
- How do we continue an effective ongoing process of public education and public input?

In addition to the Advisory Group and the Work Groups, the community forums will be used to gather information about how Iowans believe welfare reform programs should be changed.

The community forums are being started in December rather than waiting until 1997 because there is a requirement in the federal welfare reform law for a 45-day public comment period on a State Plan that Iowa has submitted. For Iowa, that 45-day comment period is over about the end of December. However, the need and desire for public education, input, and involvement is so strong, there will be continuing community forums beyond the federally required 45-day public comment period to give the public further opportunities to become involved.

The December forums will not cover every detail, but provide you examples of the areas where communities and individuals might be most interested.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Federal welfare reform became law on August 22, 1996, when President Clinton signed the law known officially as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The law is nearly 500 pages long, has different effective dates ranging from August 1996 through the year 2000, and affects many programs other than just the cash assistance and job training programs which are usually the ones identified in the news. The programs affected by the law are:

Food Stamps -- Food Stamps is the program that provides benefits to low income people, including the elderly, disabled, families with or without children, and other individuals, to assist them in purchasing food. In the month of October 1996, Iowa had 70,664 households totaling 168,238 individuals receiving a total of over \$11 in million Food Stamp benefits. While most people are familiar with the paper Food Stamp coupons, some households get their benefits by using a plastic Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, much like an ATM card.

Medicaid, also called Title XIX (Title 19, or Medical Assistance) -- Medicaid is a program that provides low income people assistance with medical expenses and provides health care coverage ranging from basic health needs to nursing home care. Medicaid is different from Medicare. Medicaid is an assistance program while Medicare is an insurance program for which people on social security pay premiums. Medicare is run by the federal Social Security Administration while Medicaid is run by each state. This welfare reform law affects only Medicaid.

As with Food Stamps, Medicaid covers individuals and families of all ages and family status. In October 1996, 224,679 Iowans received Medicaid. The monthly cost for Medicaid in Iowa is nearly \$100 million per month.

Supplemental Security Income, or SSI -- SSI provides cash assistance to low income disabled individuals. The federal welfare reform law impacts SSI benefits for children. In October 1996, 6,900 Iowa children were receiving SSI benefits.

Child Care -- State child care programs in the Department of Human Services provide assistance with child care costs for low income families who are working and to those who are participating in Iowa's PROMISE JOBS program, and in some cases, who are in education. In the current year, Iowa will have over \$40 million in child care funding for low-income families, which is double what it was several years ago.

Child Support Enforcement -- The Child Support Recovery Unit provides assistance in establishing paternity and in establishing and enforcing child support orders for both families on public assistance and for families who are not receiving public assistance that apply for services and pay an application fee. During the state fiscal year 1996, which ran from July 1995 to June 1996, the CSRU had 158,262 cases and collected over \$160 million in total child support.

Social Services Block Grant, or SSBG, or Title XX (Title 20) Block Grant -- The SSBG is a lump sum of federal funding that can be used for human services as the state defines the need. Iowa has been using SSBG funds for a variety of purposes, including child care, child welfare services, mental health reimbursement for counties, family planning, and Department of Human Services operations. The total amount of federal SSBG funds expected to come to Iowa prior to the federal welfare reform law was about \$30 million per year.

The Welfare Reform law would have decreased SSBG by 15 percent. Congress restored some funds leaving a decrease of about 11 percent. This is one issue that many counties have been concerned about, since it could have potentially reduced the funding to counties for mental health services. However, the Department of Human Services budget proposal restores the funding to its full level for the next state fiscal year, which starts July 1, 1997. There is still an issue with the reduced funding for the current state fiscal year, which ends June 30, 1997.

The **Family Investment Program** also called F-I-P or FIP -- FIP was formerly known as AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) or ADC (Aid to Dependent Children). This program provides cash assistance to low income families based on the income and size of the family. In October 1996, 30,252 families totaling 81,868 individuals received a little over \$10 million in cash benefits through the Family Investment Program, or an average of about \$331 per month per family. This program also provides employment and training services through the **PROMISE JOBS** program.

BLOCK GRANTS

A block grant from the federal government typically takes several types of federal funding that a state previously received, and rolls them into one source of funding, with increased flexibility in how funds can be used.

While block grants may help eliminate some of the federal rules that seem burdensome, they do not eliminate all of the rules, and in some cases, there are actually new rules.

All of the programs in the welfare reform law are not in a block grant. There are three block grants in the law. The law creates a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, consolidates several child care programs into the Child Care Development Fund which was formerly called the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and reduces funding in the already existing Social Services Block Grant.

The federal law also makes changes to other programs without creating a block grant. This is an important distinction, because some of the changes, like those for food stamps and child support recovery and eligibility for legal immigrants, are federal laws that go into effect on specific dates, and contain specific mandates and requirements that are independent from how Iowa implements welfare reform. Those programs are not part of a block grant, and thus “stand alone”. The State Plan for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant does not mention many of those other program issues. That is because they are separate from the block grant and cannot be affected by the State Plan.

FOOD STAMPS

Not a Block Grant

As mentioned earlier, the Food Stamp Program is not a block grant program. Even though the Iowa Department of Human Services runs the programs, nearly all of the rules for the Food Stamp Program are designed at the federal level and Iowa does not have a lot of options about how the program can look for our citizens.

Work Requirement

A major change in the Food Stamp Program is the requirement that certain individuals who are 18 through 50 years of age must be employed or in a work and training program. Many counties and other individuals have asked questions about this requirement already, out of concern that there could be a large number of individuals who would no longer get food stamp benefits.

This food stamp work requirement does not apply to anyone who is mentally or physically unable to work, or who has children in the home, or who is pregnant, or who is exempt from a mandatory work registration requirement in the Food Stamp Program. If a person meets any one of those criteria, the law does not apply. Individuals who have been and will continue to be exempt from mandatory work registration are:

- under age 16 or 60 or older;
- receiving Family Investment Program;
- caring for a dependent child under age 6 or an incapacitated person;
- receiving unemployment compensation;
- in a residential drug or alcoholic treatment program;
- migrant or seasonal farm workers under contract to start work in 30 days;
- working at least 30 hours a week;
- going to school at least half-time; or,
- an SSI applicant.

This change started affecting people on December 1, 1996. March 1997 is the first month that anyone could lose food stamps because of this change. If a person receives food stamps in December, January and February, 18 through 50 years of age, is not exempt from mandatory work registration, is able to work, is not pregnant, does not have children in the home, and is not working or in a training program 20 hours per week, February will be the last month that person receives food stamps until December 1999. The 3 month period is cumulative; the 3 months do not have to be in a row. They can occur anytime in a 3 year period, at which point, the person would no longer be able to receive food stamps until that 3 year period was over, or until that person went to work or started a training program.

There have had many questions about how many persons this could affect. The Department of Human Services sent notices about this food stamp work requirement to 5,400 food stamp households that contained persons who were 18 through 50 years of age and did not have children, and were not reporting income from work or disability. This notice was sent simply to inform them of the law. It is unknown how many of those might eventually lose food stamps.

Individuals have asked if Iowa will replace the federal food stamp benefits with state paid benefits if individuals become ineligible under this provision. That will be a legislative decision, but with Iowa's low unemployment rate, it may be unlikely that Iowa would choose to make up for the lost federal benefits when the person could retain eligibility by working at least 20 hours per week of work, even if it is a low wage job. Remember, if they have children in the home, are not able to work, are younger than 18 or older than 50, not required to be registered for work, this work requirement does not apply.

Cost of Living Increases

Another area of major change in the Food Stamp Program is a reduction in cost of living increases. This has resulted in conflicting statements in the media over whether there was a cut in food stamp benefits or just a reduction in growth. Following is an example.

A household of 4 who had no other income, including no cash assistance, would have received \$397 in food stamp benefits each month prior to October 1996. Under the old law, this was scheduled to increase to \$412 in October. However, the new federal law changed that to \$400. So, benefits did go up, just not as much as was originally planned. In the future years, food stamp benefits may stay the same or increase some, but families will not have as much purchasing power if the level of food stamp benefits do not keep up with the price of food.

Waivers and Control Groups

Currently Iowa has several waivers of federal food stamp rules. These waivers were a part of Iowa's welfare reform that started in October 1993. At this time, it is unclear whether these food stamp waivers will be able to continue. The waivers are in several areas:

- First, there are several waivers for incentives to go to work, that allow households to keep more of their food stamp benefits when they go to work. If there is earned income, not as much income is counted as there was without the waivers. When all income is counted, benefits reduce quickly.
- Second, there are waivers to allow families and individuals to have more assets. Without the waivers, a family could not have very many assets and remain eligible for food stamp benefits.
- Third, there are waivers to encourage more savings by not counting interest income and certain money in savings accounts when we determine eligibility. This helps families and individuals save something for their future.

These types of food stamp waivers are also consistent with the waivers we have for the Family Investment Program.

MEDICAID

Not a Block Grant

Medicaid is not a block grant program. Even though the Iowa Department of Human Services runs the programs, nearly all of the rules for the Medicaid Program are designed at the federal level and Iowa does not have a lot of options about how the program can look for our citizens.

De-Linking of Medicaid from the Family Investment Program

In the past, Medicaid was automatically given to families who received cash assistance in the Family Investment Program. Under the new federal welfare reform law, Medicaid eligibility will be determined separately. Regardless of what future changes may occur in the Family Investment Program, Medicaid eligibility will be determined under the same rules that existed for the Family Investment Program as of July 16, 1996. This will not be noticeable to people on Medicaid now, but it is possible that if the Family Investment Program changes over time, some people could receive Family Investment Program benefits and not be able to receive Medicaid.

This could affect decisions about the Family Investment Program in the future.

Transitional Medicaid Assistance

Families who leave the Family Investment Program because they have earned income are able to get Medicaid assistance for up to an additional 12 months and possibly longer. If a family leaves the Family Investment Program because of child support payments, they are able to get Medicaid assistance for an additional 4 months and possibly longer.

These types of transitional Medicaid benefits for families already existed in federal law, but would have gone away in 2 years without a change in the law. The federal welfare reform law extended these transitional benefits to the year 2002.

SSI

Not a Block Grant

SSI is not a block grant program. The Department of Human Services does not administer the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. But most people who receive SSI do receive Medicaid from the Department of Human Services.

Change in SSI Relating to Children

The welfare reform law changes the way that eligibility is determined for children who apply for and receive SSI benefits. SSI has a listing of medical conditions that are used to determine if a child is disabled for SSI purposes. That listing of conditions will continue. However, the new disability standards eliminate an Individual Functional Assessment which was used for children who did not meet any of the specified conditions on the listing of medical conditions. In some cases, this assessment expanded certain medical conditions, but generally focused more on behavioral disorders.

The new standards are in place now for new applicants for SSI. Letters from the Social Security Administration will be sent to families that might be affected. In addition, it has been estimated that as many as 1 out of every 4 children already on SSI could lose their benefits. No benefits will end before July 1997. The Department of Human Services believes that most of the families affected by this change will be able to continue receiving Medicaid assistance for that child even though the child loses SSI.

CHILD CARE

Financing under the Block Grant

The primary change to child care as a result of the federal law is the change in how child care is financed. In the past there were several different federal programs, each with their own rules and funds. In the Department of Human Services, those federal rules resulted in 6 different child care programs.

Effective October 1, 1996, most of those programs have been merged into a single child care block grant called the Child Care Development Fund. Under the new Child Care Development Fund, Iowa will receive additional federal funding for the federal fiscal year that began October 1, 1996, in the amount of approximately \$9 million. Federal funding will increase by approximately \$1 to \$1.5 million dollars each year for the next several years.

Increased Flexibility

While no significant changes are required by the child care block grant, federal law gives Iowa flexibility to make changes in child care assistance programs. Rather than have several programs each with their own rules, Iowa could decide that it would be better to have only one or two programs. Iowa also may have the ability to streamline and simplify child care programs. Some of the streamlining may save money, and some of it may cost money since not all of the current programs pay the same amount of child care subsidy.

Iowa has waivers from the old federal rules that allow the Department of Human Services to give transitional child care benefits for up to 24 months to working families who leave the Family Investment Program voluntarily or due to income or child support. This helps stabilize the family and support employment. Iowa will not have to give up this provision, but may in fact be able to cancel the waiver and continue the policy because Iowa now has the flexibility to do that.

Challenges in Child Care

Even though the federal government is sending us \$9 million more in child care funding, there are a number of needs that could use up that funding. They include:

- Determining what level of eligibility should exist for families needing child care. Currently, families get into the state child care assistance program, the largest child care subsidy program in the Department of Human Services, if their income is at or below 110% of poverty. Some advocates believe that this should be increased to a higher level of income to help support other low-income working families. This issue also could be impacted by whether Iowa would choose to use a system of copayments where families would share in the cost of services, thereby receiving a lower subsidy.
- Iowa has not raised rates for child care providers in the state child care programs for 3 years. Some providers are paid at different rates. Many large child care providers say that their cost of providing child care is now exceeding what they receive in payment under the current subsidy system, particularly if a large proportion of the children in their care are from low-income families.
- Iowa and its communities will be challenged by child care because of welfare reform in general. As we seek to move more families to work, the demand for child care will increase. Some areas of the state have enough child care providers, but many do not. Of particular concern is that many jobs may be during nontraditional work hours, such as evenings, night shifts, or weekends, when it is even harder to find child care. Also expected to increase is the demand for infant care, which is more expensive. This is one area that will vary by community and may be a subject we should talk about more in depth in a future forum.

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Child support enforcement was one of the largest section of the federal welfare reform law. Like food stamps, child support enforcement is not a part of the block grant. Many of the provisions are requirements which will help states collect child support, particularly when the parents live in different states. In fact, about 30% of all child support cases involve parents who live in 2 states.

The child support provisions in the federal law are not as flexible as other provisions of the law. Congress intentionally made the rules less flexible so that all states would be similar in enforcing child support. Many of the provisions of the federal law are already in Iowa law. Some do not take effect for several years. Several of the provisions may help states find parents who owe child support. Examples of two key child support issues follow.

\$50 Child Support Rebates

When families receive Family Investment Program cash assistance, child support payments for the children are kept by the state to offset part of the cost of the assistance given to the family. If child support is paid in the month it is due, the family is given up to \$50 of the payment (called a rebate), based upon a federal mandate. In Iowa, families receive about \$3.4 million in child support rebates each year.

The original concept of the \$50 rebate was two-fold. First, it was believed that it would encourage parents who receive cash assistance to cooperate with states in establishing and enforcing child obligations. Second, the \$50 rebate was a way to provide additional money to low-income families, particularly in states which had low ADC cash assistance payments.

Effective October 1, 1996, the federal requirement for the \$50 child support rebate was ended. Iowa is continuing to pay the \$50 rebates at this time, but this will be a policy decision for Iowa in the future. If Iowa stops the \$50 rebate, funding would be available which could be used for other purposes.

Location of Persons Who Owe Child Support

Each state will be required to refer information on all child support orders and on all who obtain a new job to a national registry. This will provide states with increased abilities to find persons who have a court order in another state or who are working in another state. This is an example of how the federal welfare reform law increases the tools for child support enforcement once the technology necessary to make this work is in place.

SERVICES TO NONCITIZENS

This is another area where counties and communities have expressed concern that some individuals who currently get benefits will no longer be eligible to receive them.

“Noncitizens” is a term that has often been used interchangeably with the terms “immigrants” and “aliens”. There are both legal and illegal aliens.

Illegal Aliens

Illegal aliens were not able to get assistance prior to the federal welfare reform law and that will continue. An exception to this is that illegal aliens can obtain emergency medical care. Emergency medical care would be care that is needed to prevent a loss of life or limb. Labor and delivery services are included as emergency medical care, but prenatal care is not.

The federal law on immigrants is very complex, and breaks down immigrants into even more groups in determining eligibility.

Legally Admitted Aliens, But Not Admitted For Permanent Residence

Legally admitted aliens who are not admitted for permanent residence have the same restrictions as illegal aliens; in other words they cannot receive benefits, except for emergency medical care.

People who are included in this group are:

- foreign government officials;
- foreign visitors;
- foreign students; and,
- foreign exchange visitors.

Legal Immigrants Entering the United States on or after August 22, 1996 .

Immigrants arriving in the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996, are not eligible for federal means-tested programs until they have been in the U.S. for five years, with some exceptions. A means-tested program uses income and resources to determine eligibility.

Individuals that can get assistance before five years are:

- refugees, people who've been given asylum, and those whose deportation have been delayed;
- veterans or those in active duty of the U.S. Armed Forces, and their spouses and dependents; and,
- Refugee and Entrant Assistance activities for Cuban-Haitian entrants.

Programs that are not included in the 5-year bar are:

- emergency medical assistance;
- emergency disaster relief;
- national school lunch benefits;
- child nutrition act benefits;
- public health assistance (not including Medicaid) for immunizations, testing and treatment of symptoms of communicable diseases;
- foster care and adoption assistance unless foster or adoptive parent is an immigrant subject to 5-year bar;
- programs specified by the Attorney General (provide in-kind services, are not conditioned on income or resources, and are necessary for the protection of life or safety);
- higher education;
- means-tested programs under the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA);
- Head Start; and,
- Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

Immigrants Living in the United States Prior to August 22, 1996

Immigrant Category	Family Investment Program	Food Stamps	Medicaid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees. • People who've been given asylum. • Aliens whose deportation have been delayed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance for up to 5 years after date of entry. • State has the option to continue benefits beyond 5 years and the State has chosen this option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance for 5 years after date of entry. • Cannot get assistance after August 1997 if here 5 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance for up to 5 years after date of entry. • State has the option to continue benefits beyond the 5 years and the State has chosen this option.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans or those in active duty of the U.S. Armed Forces, their spouses and dependents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aliens and legal permanent residents of the U.S. who've worked for 10 years. (The 10 years is counted in the same way that the Social Security Administration counts time worked.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get assistance regardless of how long in the U.S.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other aliens not listed above (e.g., persons admitted for purposes of family reunification, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State has the option to provide assistance, and the State has chosen this option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current recipients may get food stamps until August 1997, but not after. • State has the option to cancel immediately. The state has not chosen this option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State has the option to provide assistance, and the State has chosen this option.

Note: Refugee and Entrant Assistance activities are not affected.

Deeming

The income and resources of an immigrant's sponsor who completes an affidavit of support (and his/her spouse) count as the immigrant's income in determining if the immigrant can get assistance. In other words, if an immigrant has a sponsor, and the immigrant is not working but the sponsor is, the sponsor's income will count for the immigrant just as if it was the immigrant's own income. This creates a financial responsibility for sponsors of immigrants.

Previously, deeming applied only to Family Investment Program, Food Stamps and SSI. Now deeming applies to all federal programs that use income and resources to decide if a person can get assistance until the sponsored immigrant becomes a citizen or has worked for 10 years in the United States. Immigrants need a sponsor if the State Department or the Immigration and Naturalization Service determines that the immigrant may become dependent on public assistance. Immigrants are not always sponsored. Refugees are not sponsored and employment-based immigrants are generally not sponsored.

New deeming rules do not affect immigrants who were in the U.S. before August 22, 1996. Deeming will become effective in 5 years for federal programs for sponsored immigrants arriving in the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996. However, new immigrants are subject to the 5 year ban first, then deeming applies until citizenship or 10 years of work. State and local programs can also apply deeming to their programs, if they so choose, and do not have to wait the same 5 years as under the federal program.

CURRENT IOWA WELFARE REFORM

In October of 1993, Iowa implemented its own welfare reform program. Iowa's welfare reform today includes over 30 waivers of federal rules. That means that Iowa had permission from the federal government to operate a program different in over 30 areas of federal rules that normally are required. Most of those waivers are in the Family Investment and PROMISE JOBS programs, some are in the Food Stamp and Transitional Child Care programs. Most of the waivers relate to: helping make work pay by allowing families to keep more of their benefits when they go to work; creating incentives to develop savings and assets; promoting family stability; and, work and training requirements.

While the new federal welfare reform law still has rules, one example of how much more flexible it is than the old law is that if the federal welfare reform law had been in effect in 1993, Iowa would not have needed the waivers for the Family Investment, PROMISE JOBS, or Transitional Child Care programs. Iowa could have implemented Iowa's reforms without federal permission.

In order to get our existing federal waivers, Iowa had to agree to have a control group for evaluation purposes. A control group is a group of people who must receive the old AFDC policies. Iowa's control group equals between 5% and 10% of the families receiving Family Investment Program and Food Stamp benefits in 9 counties of the state. Those counties are: Black Hawk, Clinton, Des Moines, Jackson, Jones, Linn, Polk, Pottawattamie and Woodbury.

Many individuals in this state have expressed the position that Iowa should take advantage of the new option to eliminate the control groups and serve everyone with welfare reform policies. The control groups have shown that those who do not receive Iowa's welfare reform policies are disadvantaged. Before Iowa started welfare reform in 1993, about 18% of families who received cash assistance had earned income. In October 1996, over 36% of the families getting true welfare reform policies had earned income, but less than 20% of those getting control policies, or

old ADC policies, had earned income. All of these families are in the same environment with the same employment opportunities. This shows that it is important to serve everyone with welfare reform.

Please refer to the packet of charts prepared by the Department of Human Services that provide some additional descriptions of Iowa's current welfare reform.

Many requirements of the new federal welfare reform program are already in place in Iowa's welfare reform program. For this reason, there will not have to be as many changes made as there would have had to be if Iowa did not have the current welfare reform program. In fact, Iowa will be able to keep nearly all parts of Iowa's welfare reform program, if we so choose. If we have options and want to make the changes later, we can do that.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

Program Name

The federal welfare reform law changes the old federal Aid to Families With Dependent Children (or AFDC, ADC) and JOBS (work and training) programs into the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families program, also referred to as TANF.

In Iowa, the programs that currently offer services which will be under the federal Temporary Assistance For Needy Families program are called the Family Investment Program (FIP), which provides cash assistance grants to families, and the PROMISE JOBS program, which provides employment and training services to families in the Family Investment Program. Iowa will not be required to change the names of its programs, and expects to continue calling them the Family Investment and PROMISE JOBS programs.

TANF is a Block Grant

Previously, when a state spent funds on welfare, the federal government paid a percentage of the costs. Under the new federal welfare reform law, Iowa will receive a single sum, regardless of how much is spent, each year. This amount is based on the amount of program costs Iowa had during the 12 month period of October 1993 to September 1994. At that time, the program costs were higher than they are today. As a result, Iowa will actually get more federal money this year and next year than the state would have gotten under the old federal law. If the economy stays strong, Iowa will continue to get more federal money than the state would have otherwise gotten.

The TANF Block Grant stays constant each year for 6 years, at a little over \$130 million per year. If five years from now the economy changes, we will not get an increase in federal funding.

Purpose of the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families Block Grant Program

The federal welfare reform law has goals of family stability, work, reduction in out of wedlock pregnancies and marriage. The federal law states that the purpose of the Block Grants to States For Temporary Assistance For Needy Families is to:

“Increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to –

- “1. provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- “2. end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- “3. prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- “4. encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”

Timing of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the State Plan

The federal law requires that each state must submit a State Plan and must begin following the rules of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant by July 1, 1997. States can decide to begin sooner.

In order for Iowa to start getting additional federal money this year, a State Plan had to be submitted to the federal government. How this additional federal money will be spent is not yet decided, but these federal funds must be spent on children and families. There is also a requirement that the state allow 45 days for public comment on the State Plan before the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program begins. Iowa’s State Plan was submitted on

November 15, 1996. Iowa is one of 35 states that submitted a State Plan by that date. That is one of the reasons for the forums in December. The forums will also help the state gain further public input into welfare reform.

In the past, programs were designed based on federal law and federal rules. State Plans under those laws and rules were several inches thick. The new TANF State Plan that was submitted to the federal government was very different than this. The TANF State Plan is a little over 20 pages long and for the most part just says that Iowa will continue the Family Investment and PROMISE JOBS programs as they are today.

Saying that Iowa will continue the programs does not prevent the state from making changes in the future. It is important to emphasize and understand that this State Plan does not tie us into the current system. It simply brings us into compliance with the federal law early, and will result in an estimated \$5-\$8 million in additional federal funding between now and June 30, 1997.

The State Plan that was submitted can be changed both during and after the 45-day comment period. The State Plan must also be resubmitted every two years and a new public comment period is required each time.

THE FAMILY INVESTMENT AND PROMISE JOBS PROGRAMS AS THEY APPEAR TODAY

All families who apply for the Family Investment Program must have children in the home, must be residents of Iowa, must not have resources available over a maximum amount, and cannot have income over a maximum amount depending on their family size. Families who receive welfare reform policies must meet all of these conditions to receive cash assistance.

FIP Resource Limits: (such as cash, savings, checking accounts, stocks, bonds, etc.)

- Applicants = \$2,000 per household
- Recipients = \$5,000 per household
- A vehicle for each adult and working teen valued at: \$3,889. If the car is valued above this amount, the excess counts toward the \$2,000 and \$5,000 limit.

FIP Income Limits and Cash Payment Amount:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gross Income Limit	\$675.25	\$1330.15	\$1570.65	\$1824.10	\$2020.20	\$2249.60

In the gross income test, all earnings (before taxes are taken out) are used. Family Investment Program benefits will not be paid if the total earnings plus any unearned income, like Social Security or child support, is more than the gross income limit.

If the family's income is less than the gross income limit, a cash grant is calculated.

One of the themes of Iowa's welfare reform was to "make work pay." Under the old ADC system, at a certain point, ADC recipients actually lost \$1 in benefits for every \$1 they earned. There was no incentive to go to work. Under Iowa's Family Investment Program, families can get several earned income expenses and deductions that serve as incentives to go to work. In fact, an individual would lose, at most, 40 cents for every \$1 earned under Iowa's welfare reform, and it could be less if they have high child care costs. This does create an incentive to go to work.

The amount of reduction is then subtracted from the maximum grant standard. Whatever is left is the amount of the cash assistance payment for the family. The maximum grant standard is the amount a family who qualifies for cash assistance and has no income can get. Those maximum payments are:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Maximum Payment	\$183	\$361	\$426	\$495	\$548	\$610

FIP Work Transition Period (WTP): One other incentive to help move persons into work that do not have an adequate job history applies to persons who start a new job and made less than \$1,200 in the 12 months before the month the new job began. For those persons, the new earnings may not be counted for Family Investment Program purposes for four months, meaning the family can get a full grant for a while, during the period they are adjusting to the parent going to work. The four months begin the month the job started. Earnings must be reported timely for the Work Transition Period to be received.

PROMISE JOBS

The PROMISE JOBS program offers employment and training services to people who receive Family Investment Program assistance. Nearly every family in the Family Investment Program is in PROMISE JOBS and completes a Family Investment Agreement. Family Investment Agreements have also been referred to by some as self-sufficiency plans.

The Family Investment Agreement outlines what the person will do to become self-sufficient, what the state will do to support those activities, and the date by which the family will leave the Family Investment Program. Under Iowa's welfare reforms, the dates are individualized and range from a few months to several years. Iowa does not have a one-size-fits-all time limit. The Family Investment Agreement includes many of the themes heard from the public and from policy makers in implementing welfare reform in 1993. Those themes include personal responsibility, individualized expectations, and expanded opportunities. The themes of accountability with consequences are incorporated into the Limited Benefit Plan. If a person does not complete a Family Investment Agreement or completes an agreement and does not follow through with it, the family will enter a Limited Benefit Plan, which can result in a reduction and termination of benefits. The Limited Benefit Plan is described in the State Plan.

The only people who do not currently participate in PROMISE JOBS or do not have a Family Investment Agreement are those who are:

- under 16 years of age and not a parent;
- 16 to 19 years of age, not a parent, and in school;
- disabled and unable to participate;
- working 30 hours per week when they first apply for Family Investment Program assistance;
- a parent of a child under 3 months of age when first applying for Family Investment Program assistance; or,
- assigned to a control group, or old ADC policies, in one of the 9 control counties we talked about earlier.

The only exception to the above is that teen parents, 19 and younger, must participate in PROMISE JOBS unless they are disabled.

While in a Family Investment Agreement, individuals can participate in one or more types of activities that will help lead them to self-sufficiency. These activities are listed in the state plan. If the activities are an approved part of the Family Investment Agreement, the state will help the participant with transportation and child care costs, and certain other costs of completing an education.

Changes that **MUST** be made to Iowa's Family Investment and PROMISE JOBS Programs under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant:

- A five year lifetime limit must be placed on families who receive assistance or services paid for with federal TANF dollars. This means that every adult who gets Family Investment Program or PROMISE JOBS services can not get more than 60 months of service in their lifetime if federal funds are used. Assistance received in other states will count toward this limit. Assistance received before a state begins the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant does not count toward the 60 month limit. For Iowa, the time limit will start when the federal government approves our State Plan, which we believe will probably be January 1997.

Once any adult in a family has received 60 months of service, the state can no longer use the block grant funds to provide assistance and services to that family with one exception. This 5 year time limit follows the adult in the family. Children do not have a limit on assistance they can receive as children, but their assistance does end if the adult's assistance ends. If a child receives assistance with their parent for five years and then grows up to need Family Investment Program help as an adult, they will be able to get that help, and as an adult will start his or her own 60 month limit. If the state uses any TANF

funds for any services to a family, even if it is not FIP or PROMISE JOBS, each month those services are received count toward the 60 month limit.

The one exception to the 5 year time limit is that the federal law does allow states to exempt up to 20% of the caseload in any given month from the time limit if they meet a "hardship" definition or have been a victim of domestic violence. The state is able to define what a "hardship" is. In other words, Iowa can make some limited exceptions to the federal time limit. Also, the federal time limit applies only to the use of federal funds. If the state were to choose to fund some services with only state funding, the months those services were provided would not count towards or be affected by the federal time limit, unless Iowa also passes a state law to have the same time limit on state funding.

One unanswered question about the 5 year time limits is around the impact of Iowa's waivers for individualized time frames in the Family Investment Agreement. The federal law says that if a state's existing waiver conflicts with the federal law and the state chooses to keep the waiver, then the state can follow the waiver policy rather than the federal law.

Some have suggested that Iowa's waiver could be interpreted as not requiring lifetime time limits. However, it appears that another interpretation is that the waivers do not say Iowa won't have lifetime time limits, so the federal law does apply. Another issue is that our waivers expire in 2 years and cannot be renewed, which is well before the 5 year time limit in the federal law. It is possible that Iowa could keep our waivers and after two years, when the waivers expire, the federal government could tell the state that the time limits must be retroactive back to January 1997.

At this time, the Department of Human Services is assuming that the 5 year lifetime time limit will start with the federal approval of Iowa's TANF State Plan, which will probably be in January 1997. The Department of Human Services will continue to look at this

issue, but believe it is in the best interests of recipients to start with the assumption that time limits apply. That would be better than not telling people they have started, and later learning that the federal government will require us to calculate the time limits back to January 1997.

- Another major policy issue is that FIP will no longer be an entitlement program. The old ADC program operated as an entitlement program for about 60 years. That meant that if you met the rules, you automatically received assistance, whether the Department of Human Services had enough funding or not.

It is not clear what the absence of an entitlement really will mean to Iowans. For now, this will not make a difference to families receiving assistance. It seems likely that Iowa will continue to have financial eligibility criteria, and as long as the economy stays fairly constant, it is unlikely that the Department of Human Services will run out of funding. However, if the economy does change, policy makers would have to decide if they want to provide additional funding, create waiting lists, or reduce assistance and services to be able to serve more individuals.

- Another major policy issue in the federal welfare reform law is a 2 year work requirement. Within 24 months, or 2 years, of receiving Family Investment Program assistance all adults must be in a work activity. However, even though other parts of the federal law define work in a very limited way, the State is able to define what a “work activity” is for the purpose of the 2 year work requirement .

When submitting the State Plan, the State defined “work activity” in a way that would include any activity in a Family Investment Agreement, any paid or unpaid employment, and allows a credit or exception for disabled individuals who are unable to work and for those caring for a newborn child.

- Another major requirement of the federal law is that states must decide if they are going to require that, within 2 months of receiving Family Investment Program assistance, all unemployed adults must be in a community service program. The way the federal law is worded, Iowa must do this unless it notifies the federal government in writing that the state chooses not to. Since Iowa's welfare reform already includes community service, because Iowa already is moving families into work, and because the 2 month requirement is inconsistent with some of the training opportunities Iowa provides, the State included in the State Plan that Iowa will opt out of this requirement. This does not prevent Iowa from starting this requirement in the future if it makes sense for Iowa later.
- Another requirement in the federal law is that within 30 days of receiving Family Investment Program assistance, adults who are new applicants must complete an assessment of job readiness. The assessment must be completed within 90 to 180 days for current recipients. Failure to do an assessment would mean that the person is not eligible for assistance. Iowa currently does an assessment as a part of completing a Family Investment Agreement, so this will not be new, but the state will have to ensure that people move quickly through the assessment process.
- A requirement in the federal law related to minor parents is that federal money can not be used to provide assistance to a parent under the age of 18 unless they live with their parent or in another supervised living arrangement. There are good cause reasons for not living with a parent or in a supervised living arrangement. This policy was required by Iowa legislation passed in 1995 and began November 1, 1996, so will not be new to Iowa.

- The law also includes a requirement emphasizing the importance of completing high school. In fact the law says that federal money can not be used to provide assistance to a person who is:
 - unmarried;
 - under age 18;
 - has a child at least 12 weeks of age in his or her care;
 - has not completed high school or its equivalent; and,
 - is not in school.

This policy was required by Iowa legislation passed in 1995 and began November 1, 1996, so will not be new to Iowa.

- The federal law focuses on employment and has stiffer work requirements than in the past. The law places much less of a focus on education after high school. Iowa can use federal money to pay for education past high school but must at the same time be able to meet the work participation requirements. Following are some charts that show the work participation requirements that states must meet. If Iowa does not meet the requirements, the state could be penalized by the federal government up to 5% of the TANF block grant (over \$6 million) the first year, which could climb to as high as 21% (over \$27 million) in later years.

Activities that Can Be Used To Meet The Work Participation Requirements

Activity Available In A Family Investment Agreement	Does it Count For Work Rate Calculations Under the Old Law?	Will it Count For the New Work Participation Rate in the Future?
Orientation	Yes	No
Assessment	Yes	No
Paid or unpaid work experience	Yes	Yes
High school completion, GED, English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education	Yes, for anyone	Yes, but only for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teens * • others who also work
Post High School Classroom Training	Yes	For up to 12 months of vocational education *
Part-time school - part-time work	Yes	Yes
Unpaid community service	Yes	Yes
Job-search and job readiness	Yes	For up to 6 weeks, no more than 4 weeks consecutively
Education directly related to employment	Yes (unlimited)	Yes, but only for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teens * • others who also work
Job Skills	Yes (unlimited)	Yes, if also working
Employment	For the first 2 months of employment	Yes (indefinitely)
On-the-Job training	Yes	Yes
Parenting skills	Yes	Unsure, may be job readiness which is limited.
Family Development	Yes	Unsure, specific activities may count.

* The combination of teens (age 19 or less) in high school/GED or in education directly related to employment, and persons in vocational education can be counted only up to 20% of the caseload.

Required Hours Of Participation for Work Participation

(Note: The years represent federal fiscal years which run from October through September. For example, 1997 = October 1996 through September 1997.)

	All Families Number of Hours	Percentage That Must Be In A Countable Activity - All FIP Families
1997	20 hours	25%
1998	20 hours	30%
1999	25 hours	35%
2000	30 hours	40%
2001	30 hours	45%
2002	30 hours	50%

	Two Parent Families Number of Hours	Percentage That Must Be In A Countable Activity - Two Parent FIP Families
1997	First parent - 35 hours/wk If getting child care, second parent - 20 hours/wk	75%
1998	First parent - 35 hours/wk If getting child care, second parent - 20 hours/wk	75%
1999 and every year thereafter	First parent - 35 hours/wk If getting child care, second parent - 20 hours/wk	90%

Note: In 1997, 25% of the FIP caseload must be in an activity that count for work participation requirement purposes.

Finally, the federal law provides more flexibility in the Family Investment and PROMISE JOBS programs than there used to be. If Iowa makes major changes, the state may not have to go through a federal waiver process. Iowa can change the programs as it sees fit, as long as the state complies with the 5 year time limits, the work participation rates, and all of the data reporting requirements in the law.

This will allow Iowa to be more creative in our welfare reforms, even to the point about thinking about how to adjust the program in different areas of the state if different families have different barriers, needs, and opportunities.

There will be some opportunity to simplify and streamline the program, though it is important to recognize that states may be limited by the fact that most families in the Family Investment Program also receive Medicaid assistance and Food Stamp benefits. Those programs do not have the flexibility, and still have a lot of the cumbersome requirements and paperwork dictated at the federal level.

SUMMARY OF STATE PLAN

State Plan - 11/14/96 Letter from Governor Branstad to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

- Transmits the state plan; the federal law requires that the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Plan be submitted by the Governor.
- Advises that Iowa is opting out of requiring community service.

State Plan - Page 1

- This page describes the organizational makeup of the Department of Human Services, and the Department's relationship to other state agencies.

State Plan - Page 2

- Outlines that the State intends to initially continue the Family Investment Program as it currently exists by continuing waivers of federal regulations that are currently in place. This does not prevent Iowa from eliminating or changing those waivers later.
- States that the Welfare Reform Advisory Group has recommended elimination of the control group.

State Plan - Page 3

- Describes the current goals of the Family Investment Program and states that they may change over time with public input.

State Plan - Pages 3, 4, and the Top of Page 5

- Describes the eligibility criteria for the Family Investment Program. These do reflect the current rules of the Family Investment Program.

State Plan - Page 6

- States that Iowa will comply with the 5 year and 2 year time limits, that the Family Investment Program will be available statewide, and describes the PROMISE JOBS and Family Investment Agreement relationship.

State Plan - Pages 7 and 8

- Describes the activities currently available in PROMISE JOBS and Family Investment Agreements; those include:
 - ⇒ full-time or part-time work;
 - ⇒ job-seeking skills training and group or individual job search;
 - ⇒ high school completion or GED;
 - ⇒ adult basic education;
 - ⇒ English as a second language;
 - ⇒ post-secondary education;
 - ⇒ family development programs;
 - ⇒ work experience placement;
 - ⇒ on-the-job training;
 - ⇒ unpaid community service;
 - ⇒ parenting skills training;
 - ⇒ family planning counseling services;
 - ⇒ mentoring program services;
 - ⇒ any other services offered by Workforce Development.
- The bottom of page 7 and the top of page 8 describe Iowa's Limited Benefit Plan.
 - ⇒ Persons who are required to participate in PROMISE JOBS and have a Family Investment Agreement will enter the Limited Benefit Plan if they fail to sign an Agreement or if they fail to carry out the terms of the Agreement.
 - ⇒ A first Limited Benefit Plan results in 3 months of benefits for the needs of the children only, which means a reduced grant, followed by 6 months of ineligibility for the entire family. A second or subsequent Limited Benefit Plan results in an immediate 6 months of ineligibility for the entire family. If the person who had to do an Agreement is not the parent or caretaker, only the individual will enter a Limited Benefit Plan.

State Plan - Pages 8 and 9

- Speaks to the confidentiality of case information.
- Indicates that Iowa already offers some programs designed to reduce out of wedlock pregnancies, but will take a further look at things this issue. Reducing out of wedlock pregnancies is a goal of the federal legislation, and in fact, beginning in 1999, the 4 or 5 states that have the biggest actual reduction without increasing abortions will receive a bonus of \$20-\$25 million each. Therefore, this is probably an issue that Iowa policy makers will want to look at closely.
- Indicates that Iowa does target some pregnancy prevention programs to adolescent males.

State Plan - Page 9

- Indicates that families moving to Iowa from another state will not be treated differently than other families unless the Legislature directs us to do so.
- Indicates that eligible non-citizens of the U.S. will have eligibility and benefits determined in the same manner as citizens. For those ineligible for services funded under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the state will not provide state funded benefits unless directed to do so by the Legislature.

State Plan - Page 10

- Indicates that the Department of Human Services will use existing policies and procedures to ensure objective criteria for delivery of benefits and determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment.
- Persons continue to have the right to appeal any decision taken by the Department of Human Services.
- Indicates that the State has chosen to opt out of the requirement that parents or caretakers getting Family Investment Program assistance for two months must be in community service.

State Plan - Pages 11, 12, and 13

- Includes certifications required by the federal government that Iowa will continue to operate:
 - ⇒ a child support enforcement program; and,
 - ⇒ a foster care and adoption assistance program.

- States that:
 - ⇒ The Department of Human Services will administer the Family Investment Program.
 - ⇒ That members from local governments and private organizations will be consulted regarding the state plan and design of welfare services so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations.
 - ⇒ That there will be at least 45 days to submit comments on the state plan and speaks to Iowa's public forum plans.

- Certifies that:
 - ⇒ Indians will have equitable access to assistance.
 - ⇒ Iowa has and is enforcing standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse.
 - ⇒ The state will refer victims of domestic violence to counseling and supportive services.
 - ⇒ That the option to certify standards and procedures to ensure that the state will screen for and identify domestic violence will be reviewed during the 1997 Iowa legislative session.
 - ⇒ The state will make available to the public a summary of the State Plan.

State Plan - Attachment A

- A chart showing the working groups involved in welfare reform.

State Plan - Attachment A.1

- Notice of opting out of the community service provision.

State Plan - Attachment B

- State Plan Certifications.

State Plan - Attachment C

- Describes how Iowa will receive its funding allotments.

Options That Are Available Because of the Federal Welfare Reform Law

The following are questions and options already raised by the public or by welfare reform work groups that are being shared at the December forums.

1. What input does the public have on the State Plan?
2. There is an option to use Agreements signed by the Family Investment Program participant. The Agreement would give the date by which the family intends to leave the Family Investment Program, what the individual needs to do to become self-sufficient and not need Family Investment Program assistance, and what the state will do to assist the person. If a state uses an Agreement there must be a sanction for not doing an agreement or not following through with the steps in it. Iowa currently has a Family Investment Agreement and Limited Benefit Plan in place. Are there changes that should be made to Family Investment Agreements and Limited Benefit Plans?
3. Should state funds be used to provide assistance to those who are not eligible for assistance with federal funds because of the federal law? This could include noncitizens and those who have met the time limits.
4. Under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families we could use the federal funds to provide assistance or services other than the monthly Family Investment Program check that we have provided in the past. Any assistance or service could be provided as long as it would achieve the goals of the program. For example, assistance could be given through certificates, vouchers or other means or through contracts with charitable, religious, or private organizations. Assistance could be provided for home heating or cooling or for pre-pregnancy family planning services. Are there other types of service or assistance that you would like to see in Iowa?

5. Under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families we could use the federal funds to do things other than the activities currently available under PROMISE JOBS. Are there other types of activities, services, or assistance that should be provided?
6. Are there differences in needs in some communities that should be addressed in a unique or special way from the Family Investment Program that is operated across the state?
7. Should people moving to Iowa be treated differently under the Family Investment Program than people who are Iowa residents?
8. Should Family Investment Program benefits be given to people convicted of drug-related felonies, and who have already served a sentence or done rehabilitation? If the State should decide to not give assistance to these people, for how long should they not be able to get assistance?
9. Up to 20% of the Family Investment Program cases may receive more than 5 years of assistance if they have had a hardship or been victims of domestic violence. How should the state define a "hardship?"
10. Should Iowa require drug testing of people getting Family Investment Program assistance and sanction any person whose drug test is positive?

Other Issues and Questions for Your Community to Consider

1. Is there anything that the state should do or that your community wants to do to respond to the increased need for child care providers for:
 - nontraditional hours?
 - special needs children?
 - infants?
2. How are the welfare reform changes going to affect your community?
3. What are your community's goals for its citizens?
4. Are changes needed and if so how is your community going to make the necessary changes to meet the goals?

How to Submit Comments on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families State Plan:

Written comments may be sent to:

TANF State Plan Coordinator
Department of Human Services
Division of Economic Assistance
Hoover State Office Building, 5th floor
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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