

# CENTER ON FATHERS, FAMILIES, AND PUBLIC POLICY

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## CALIFORNIA POLICY BRIEFING

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### **Racial & Ethnic Disparities Persist for California Wage Earners**

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) has recently issued a new report examining differences in earnings for white, African American, and Latino workers. According to an analysis of 2000 census bureau data, African American men earned 74 cents and Latino men 81 cents to every dollar earned by white men with similar comparisons for women earners. While Latino relative wages have remained constant and can be explained predominantly by differences in education and occupation type, relative wages for African American men and women have decreased in the last ten years and largely persist after controlling for education and job type. The authors explain that the remaining disparities for African Americans could be due to factors beyond the scope of the study which could include racism. For more information please visit the PPIC website at [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org).

### **Homelessness Continues as Forefront Issue in San Francisco**

The St. Anthony Foundation, one of San Francisco's oldest and largest soup kitchens, has released the results of a **survey** conducted among a 2002 random sample of its guests. The survey found that homelessness among those receiving meals at the shelter had doubled since 1995. The proportion of guests renting halved while costs for single-occupancy hotel rooms and rent nearly doubled over the seven-year period studied. Homelessness rose most sharply for families (from 0% to 40%) and seniors during this period. A third of the kitchen's clientele were military veterans, a quarter cited mental health issues, and a quarter cited drug or alcohol addictions. Guests identified their priorities (presented in descending order) as permanent and affordable housing (identified by almost two-thirds of guests), job training/placement (by over half), transitional housing programs (by 44%), and drug/alcohol treatment (by 39%), with mental health services and health care also cited by over a third of respondents. The full report may be found at [www.stanthonysf.org](http://www.stanthonysf.org).

In November 2002 San Francisco voters approved "**Care Not Cash**" (Proposition N), a measure that would reduce county welfare payments (General Assistance, or GA) from \$395 to \$59 in exchange for publicly guaranteed housing, food, and social services. The city must be in compliance with the new law by July 2003. With current shelter capacity at 1,350 beds and those losing assistance numbering 3,000, officials have proposed expansion of shelter space by renting hotel rooms. Preliminary evidence shows, however, that efforts to expand shelter space have focused on existing shelter beds, and that complementary social services have not yet been developed. Advocates worry that shelters will be directed to prioritize scarce shelter space for GA recipients and deny spots to non-GA recipients (predominantly immigrants, the disabled, and elderly). Though counts of the homeless population are problematic, the current homeless population in San Francisco is estimated at between eight and fifteen thousand. For details, please refer to the 5/08/03, 4/10/03, and 4/03/03 articles at [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com).

## State Legislative Update

As the current month is a time of intense legislative activity, advocates may want to be aware of proposed legislation which may affect clients, and in addition may want to support particularly client-friendly proposals:

- Senator Richard Alarcón of San Fernando Valley recently founded the Senate Select Committee on the Status of **Ending Poverty in California (EPIC)**, with the stated goals of reducing the growing income gap in the state and challenging poverty as an acceptable societal condition. The broad collaborative has considered future activities such as seeking an upward adjustment in the federal poverty level; increasing access to quality education, health care, and affordable housing; and reducing inequality in corporate wages. Though EPIC may be yet far from achieving action and legislation, the explicit goal of reducing poverty may counter pressures to reduce welfare rolls at the neglect of poverty reduction and proposed budget cuts to the state's social service programs. See the 5/07/03 article at [www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com).
- The 100% Campaign (comprised of Children Now, the Children's Defense Fund, and The Children's Partnership) is currently sponsoring Assembly Bill 1163 (introduced by Assembly member Frommer) which would **expand healthcare access** (including Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, and county insurance programs) to income-eligible children by addressing the barriers identified in the advocacy group's recent report, *Children Falling Through the Cracks* (reported in last month's *California Policy Briefing*). For details or to support the bill, please visit their website at [www.100percentcampaign.org](http://www.100percentcampaign.org).
- The California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) endorses Assembly Bill 231 (introduced by Assembly member Steinberg) which covers the advocacy organization's current legislative agenda to promote **increased uptake of food stamps** among the high percentage of unserved eligible adults. Proposed measures include elimination of fingerprinting for food stamp applications, alternatives to in-face application interviews, establishment of five-month transitional food stamp benefits for welfare leavers, and increased value of allowed vehicle beyond \$4650. CFPA has a number of suggestions for getting involved in supporting this bill: please visit their website at [www.cfpa.net](http://www.cfpa.net).
- Seven California counties have received a waiver from the USDA allowing them to **extend food stamp benefits to "able-bodied adults without dependents"** (such as non-disabled noncustodial parents) for one year. (Federal law restricts food stamp receipt to three months for non-working adults). CFPA has created outreach materials for advocates in Alpine, Modoc, Del Norte, Tuolumne, Mendocino, and San Joaquin counties to educate clients of their extended eligibility. Waivers in eight more counties (Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Trinity, Stanislaus, Glenn, and areas of San Francisco) for one-year benefits will expire in May unless renewed. In addition, twenty California counties (including Los Angeles) are eligible for ABAWD waivers but have not applied. Local advocates can promote their county's renewal or application for waivers by visiting the CFPA website at [www.cfpa.net](http://www.cfpa.net).

## Update on Paternity Establishment Legislation

As reported in the July 2002 *California Policy Briefing*, legislation was introduced in the State Assembly (AB 2240) which would have amended the state's paternity establishment process. The bill, introduced by Assembly member Wright, passed both houses (by a 57-3 vote in the Assembly and a 54-17 vote in the Senate), but was vetoed by Governor Davis in September 2002. Among the bill's provisions:

- To allow withdrawal of paternity establishment and child support orders within three

years of suspicion or determination that the declared father is not of biological relation to the child. Current law dictates that paternity and child support orders must be contested within two years of establishment regardless of later evidence or knowledge.

- Require in-person delivery of summons and complaints (legally referred to as “personal service”) for paternity establishment and child support orders. Like most states, California currently allows default order establishment, with due notice considered adequately served through mail, however the state relies more heavily on default order establishment than other states with 70% of orders established by default.
- Require the completion of paternity questionnaires by custodial mothers to identify potential fathers and to promote DNA testing in ambiguous paternity situations.
- Allow non-biological fathers to sue biological fathers for any child support mistakenly paid for children not their own.

The bill had the potential of addressing mistaken orders which may result from heavy reliance on order establishment by default for the vast majority of unmarried parents. On the other hand, many advocates expressed concerns that children and women could be harmed if actively parenting fathers were allowed to disestablish financial and emotional ties to children.

Governor Davis based his veto on concerns for potential financial losses by the state, as the requirement of in-person delivery of summons would be more time- and money-intensive and reduce the state’s establishment of orders, risking noncompliance with federal performance measures and loss of \$40 million in federal funds.

Please visit [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov) for full details and history on the bill.

### **Parents Owing Child Support for Foster Care Services May Have Debt Forgiven**

Recent state legislation (see January 2002 *California Policy Briefing*) allows custodial parents below 250% of the federal poverty level and regaining custody of their children from foster care to contest child support accumulated during the period the family received CalWORKS, AFDC, or kinship assistance delivered while the child was in foster care. Most states order and retain child support from parents whose children are in foster care. For parents who regain custody of their children, the burden of debt could impede compliance with other custody requirements (such as minimum income or physical availability to child). Dependent on local child support case worker discretion, up to 100% of the debt may be forgiven. Clients who may be eligible for such debt forgiveness should be directed to the Compromise Application Packet available from their local child support agency or on-line at [www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/pub/forms/cs4477.pdf](http://www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/pub/forms/cs4477.pdf).

### **Department of Child Support Releases Three-Year Goals**

The California Department of Child Support Services has made available to the public its strategic plan for the years 2002 through 2005. Of interest to advocates and their clients, are the following objectives:

- To decrease the percentage of orders established by default from the current 68% of orders to 40% by fiscal year 2005.
- Decrease the percentage of default orders with presumed income from 42% to 12% by 2005. Presumed income is used to set order amounts in cases in which there is no wage earning information on the noncustodial parent, and is often higher than what low-income (especially unemployed) parents are able to pay.
- Increase collections on arrearage cases from 56% to 64% by 2005; and reduce the annual increase in arrearages owed from the current 10% annual increase to 2% by

2005. (Arrearages are debt accumulated on unpaid child support orders).
- Ensure that no more than 1% of collections remain undistributed at any time (it is uncertain what the current percentage of undistributed collections is).
  - Resolve complaints in a timely manner for 90% of cases.

Full report at [www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/pub/reports/2003/2003-05strategic.pdf](http://www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/pub/reports/2003/2003-05strategic.pdf).

Please see the January 2003 *California Policy Briefing* for a focus on the problem of high reliance on default orders (meaning orders are set by the court without the participation of the obligor or noncustodial parent) and resulting accumulation of uncollectible debt or arrearages.

### **Recently Legislated Job Protections Not Serving Many Domestic Violence Victims**

The California Alliance Against Domestic Violence (CAADV) finds that in the first year of the Domestic Violence Employment Leave Act (guaranteeing leave from work and protection from employer reprisal to employees coping with domestic violence), only nine claims were filed. Of these claims, one was settled, three were abandoned, four remain unresolved, and one was dismissed due to "insufficient evidence" (despite immediate termination after incident of domestic violence and job absence). Many employers are unaware of the new laws and may continue practices which discriminate against domestic violence victims. In addition, many employees remain unaware of domestic violence-related job protections or may fear confronting former employers. The protections provided by the new law may be particularly needed by women who reach their life-time limit on CalWORKS this year as research has shown receipt of waivers of work requirements and time limits disproportionate to the high prevalence of domestic violence among the state's welfare population (see the November 2002 and March 2003 *California Policy Briefing*).

The article was in the February 2003 *Alliance News* which can be requested at [www.caadv.org](http://www.caadv.org).

- The California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative has an updated chart presenting public assistance programs for which immigrants may be eligible dependent on their legal status. It is important to note that *all* immigrants (including undocumented) are eligible for emergency Medi-Cal, Medi-Cal prenatal care, Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM), Medi-Cal long-term care, and the Child Health and Disability Prevention Program. This chart is available at [www.nilc.org/ciwc/tbls\\_other-mats/Cal\\_Bs\\_Table.PDF](http://www.nilc.org/ciwc/tbls_other-mats/Cal_Bs_Table.PDF).
- Housing California has made available a chart on new funding available under the 2002 voter-approved Proposition 46 for programs assist renters and low-income home buyers. Please visit [www.housingca.org](http://www.housingca.org).
- The Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty has developed their website to feature comprehensive links to reports and data on poverty in Los Angeles and state information sources on general state issues such as local homeless populations, CalWORKS, and the uninsured. Please visit [www.weingart.org/institute](http://www.weingart.org/institute) to utilize this important resource.
- Two new web tools are available which present state and county statistics on education, health care, and rental prices, and allow visitors to create graphs, reports, and maps. Please visit "CLIKS: County-City-Community Level Information on Kids" from the Annie E. Casey Foundation at [www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi](http://www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi) and the Neighborhood Knowledge California website of the UCLA Advanced Policy Institute at <http://nkca.ucla.edu>.