

(Lacombe, 1997). Furthermore, public transportation services offer inadequate hours of operation and infrequent service. And transportation is expensive.

The problem with transportation in rural areas is also severe. In many parts of Maine, for example, there are no buses. One woman regularly hitchhikes nine miles to a training program.

Poor women . . . find themselves stranded, unable to scrape up enough money to buy or maintain cars. Pressed by welfare deadlines to seek employment outside their home, they are relying on bicycles, or squandering their money on taxicabs, or walking for miles in the dead of winter, or missing their appointments. (Barry, 2000, p. A26)

WELFARE AND HEALTH

Both the mothers on welfare and their children have a high rate of disability. This interferes with the mothers' ability to get a paid job, both because of their own health problems and because they need to stay home to care for disabled children.

About half of TANF recipients have a disability themselves or have a family member with a disability. Food Stamp recipients have similar prevalence of disability as TANF recipients. Low-income single mothers generally have disability rates that are higher than all adults, but lower than TANF and Food Stamp recipients (Lopresi, & Maag, 2009). Some states exempt disabled parents and parents caring for a disabled child from the work requirement, but there are stiff requirements for proving disability. Emotional and cognitive disabilities are especially hard to prove.

Most of the parents have disabilities that do not qualify them for SSI but still restrict their ability to work. If the TANF program used the definition of disability included in the Americans with Disabilities Act, many more women would qualify for assistance. The federal welfare law expressly provides that the ADA applies to all activities funded with TANF funds, and these standards are the ones that states should use. The definition of disability under ADA rules is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of the person, while SSI is for severe disabilities that are expected to last at least twelve months or result in death and which prevent substantial gainful activity.

The most common mental health problems are depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and general anxiety disorder. According to one study, about 42 percent of heads of households receiving TANF meet the criteria for clinical depression—more than three times the national average (Solomon, 2001). What appears to many people as "laziness" is actually depression.

Many parents have learning disabilities, up to one-half of recipients in the state of Washington. In many cases, women are not aware of their learning disabilities and in most states there are few attempts to diagnose and help women to overcome their disabilities.

THE FUTURE OF TANF

The Personal Responsibility Act expired on October 1, 2002. By then—five years after states were required to have new welfare policies in place—Congress was supposed to decide whether to reauthorize the existing law or replace it. Congress had extended the law several times, but "the reauthorization effort became trapped in a political tug of war between