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MERGING WELFARE AND EXISTING UNEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS
WOULD IMPROVE SUCCESS OF WELFARE TO WORK

States Should Look to Current Unemployment and Job Training Programs for Tools
to Move Welfare Recipients into the Labor Force

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y.--In their efforts to meet the work requirements of the
new welfare law, states should look at existing unemployment and job training programs for
tools to move welfare recipients into the work force, according to Levy Institute Resident
Scholar Oren M. Levin-Waldman. In his recent Public Policy Brief, *A New Path from
Welfare to Work*, Levin-Waldman contends that by integrating welfare programs with
existing unemployment programs, states could improve the success of their welfare-to-work
efforts while streamlining bureaucracies.

"State unemployment programs now use worker profiling to identify people who are likely to
be unemployed for an extended time, so they can be moved into job training programs and
assisted with their job search. This system could serve as a basis for moving welfare
recipients into the work force," Levin-Waldman says. In an integrated program,
unemployment offices would no longer distinguish between those who have lost their jobs
and those who have been on welfare. All job seekers would be evaluated on the basis of what
services they need in order to find employment.

"To realize the goals of work and self-sufficiency involves no less than breaking down the
distinctions between welfare programs and employment programs," Levin-Waldman says.
"Treating welfare recipients as long-term unemployed could help to ease the welfare stigma
that hinders their job prospects."

Subsidies to employers to hire welfare recipients should be tied to on-the-job training
programs to ensure that workers obtain useful skills while on the job, Levin-Waldman says.
Those identified as most likely to need comprehensive employment services would be among
the first to be selected for an employer-based voucher program.

Recently passed work-force development legislation effectively consolidates scores of
federally funded training programs and funds them through block grants, much as the new
welfare law does. It also emphasizes job training and placement. "Since work-force and
unemployment programs operate with structures and goals that are similar to those of the new welfare law, it makes sense for states to integrate them into coordinated programs serving unemployed people of all kinds, including welfare recipients," Levin-Waldman says. "States should take advantage of their newfound flexibility to creatively integrate and coordinate these related programs.

"If the goal of the new welfare law is to end dependency and foster a greater work ethic, then it needs to be tied more closely with existing policy aimed at developing the work force. Not only would this lead to efficiency in the delivery of public services, it would also help to ease the stigma attached to welfare," he says.


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