
Survey of County Human Services Officials

In August 1999, the Office of the Legislative Auditor sent questionnaires to 84 county human services directors throughout Minnesota. (Some county human services agencies are jointly administered, so not all 87 counties have their own human services director.) County human services agencies administer welfare services in Minnesota and make arrangements with local employment services providers to help welfare recipients find jobs. The purpose of our survey was to document local officials' perceptions about recent welfare reforms, including key policy issues, the performance of employment services providers, and the availability of support services.

All of the surveyed county officials responded to our survey. The results of the survey presented here are not weighted by counties' caseload size.

WELFARE REFORM IN MINNESOTA
Survey of County Human Services Directors
Office of the Legislative Auditor
Program Evaluation Division
August 1999

County: _____

Person completing survey: _____ Phone number _____

Please answer each question to best reflect your agency's experience with the Minnesota Family Investment Program (and related services). Feel free to consult with other county staff to complete the survey. Unless directed otherwise, please select only ONE response per question. If necessary, you may provide additional or clarifying comments in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper. Please mark "Don't Know" if you and your staff do not have enough information about a question to provide a reasonably informed response.

N=84 unless otherwise indicated

SERVICE AVAILABILITY

1. Based on your county's experience, please indicate the extent to which the following services are available when needed for MFIP participants who are working or in employment services: *(Circle the number of the correct response)*

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
A. Training in how to conduct a job search or apply for a job	79.8%	16.7%	2.4%	0.0%	1.2%
B. Training in how to retain a job	52.4	26.2	19.0	0.0	2.4
C. Training in "career laddering"—that is, helping clients plan for employment that will increase their earnings and promote long-term self-sufficiency	31.0	33.3	29.8	3.6	2.4
D. Transportation assistance (for work, training, or child care)	44.0	22.6	32.1	1.2	0.0
E. Housing subsidies and assistance	17.9	28.6	40.5	9.5	3.6
F. Treatment/counseling for chemical dependency	51.2	31.0	11.9	6.0	0.0
G. Treatment/counseling for mental health problems	50.0	29.8	14.3	6.0	0.0
H. General-purpose English as a Second Language programs	34.9	24.1	19.3	7.2	14.5 (N=83)
I. Programs specifically designed to teach English language skills that clients need for the <u>workplace</u>	16.9	14.5	26.5	21.7	20.5 (N=83)
J. Child care for children with physical or emotional problems	8.4	28.9	38.6	18.1	6.0 (N=83)
K. Child care for children of MFIP caregivers working nights or weekends	4.8	14.3	57.1	23.8	0.0
L. Child care for children with culturally-specific needs (e.g., diet)	7.1	9.5	32.1	25.0	26.2

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
M. Child care for children of MFIP caregivers whose primary activity is social services (e.g., treatment)	22.6%	32.1%	19.0%	19.0%	7.1%
N. Child care for MFIP families without special needs	64.3	23.8	9.5	1.2	1.2
O. Adult basic education and GED programs	71.4	21.4	7.1	0.0	0.0
P. Short-term education/training programs (three months or less)	39.3	29.8	23.8	4.8	2.4
Q. Medium-term education/training programs (4 to 12 months)	38.1	34.5	25.0	1.2	1.2
R. Long-term education/training programs (more than 12 months)	23.8	19.0	27.4	28.6	1.2
S. Sheltered work or subsidized employment	25.0	25.0	32.1	13.1	4.8
T. Unpaid work experience programs	17.9	20.2	31.0	22.6	8.3

2. In which categories above (A to T) does your county have the greatest needs for improved services?

A. Greatest need:

_____ (Choose one from A through T above)

Greatest Service Need

	Percent (N=83)
B. Training in how to retain a job	7.2%
C. Training in "career laddering"	3.6
D. Transportation assistance	16.9
E. Housing subsidies and assistance	13.3
I. Programs designed to teach English skills	3.6
J. Child care for children with physical or emotional problems	4.8
K. Child care for MFIP caregivers working nights or weekends	39.8
N. Child care for MFIP families without special needs	1.2
O. Adult basic education and GED programs	1.2
P. Short-term education or training programs	1.2
Q. Medium-term education or training programs	2.4
R. Long-term education or training programs	1.2
S. Sheltered work or subsidized employment	2.4
T. Unpaid work experience programs	1.2

B. 2nd greatest need:

_____ (Choose one from A through T above)

Second Greatest Service Need

	Percent (N=81)
B. Training in how to retain a job	6.2%
C. Training in "career laddering"	7.4
D. Transportation assistance	9.9
E. Housing subsidies and assistance	8.6
F. Treatment/counseling for chemical dependence	2.5
G. Treatment/counseling for mental health problems	2.5
H. General purpose ESL programs	2.5
I. Programs designed to teach English	1.2
J. Child care for children with physical or emotional problems	7.4
K. Child care for MFIP caregivers working nights or weekends	17.3
L. Child care for children with culturally-specific needs	9.9
M. Child care for MFIP caregivers whose primary activity is social services	6.2
N. Child care for MFIP families without special needs	1.2
P. Short-term education/training programs	4.9
Q. Medium-term education/training programs	1.2
R. Long-term education/training programs	1.2
S. Sheltered work or subsidized employment	6.2
T. Unpaid work experience programs.	3.7

3. Is there a need in your county for culturally-specific services or strategies beyond those already available to help the following MFIP subgroups have greater success in the workplace?

	Significant Need	Some Need	Little or No Need	Don't Know or Not Applicable
A. American Indians	6.0%	20.2%	59.5%	14.3%
B. Hispanic U.S. citizens	9.5	38.1	40.5	11.9
C. Hispanic non-citizens	4.8	32.1	38.1	25.0
D. African American U.S. citizens	2.4	13.1	63.1	21.4
E. African non-citizens	10.7	6.0	50.0	33.3
F. Asian American U.S. citizens	4.8	15.5	56.0	23.8
G. Asian non-citizens	1.2	17.9	48.8	32.1
H. Non-citizens from eastern European nations and/or former Soviet republics	6.0	10.7	53.6	29.8

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF MFIP AND ITS IMPACTS

4. Please estimate what changes, if any, your county's welfare population experienced between the last full year of AFDC (1997) and the months since MFIP was implemented in 1998.

	Significant Increase	Some Increase	Little or No Change	Some Decrease	Significant Decrease	Don't Know
A. Percentage of unemployed caregivers who were participating in some type of work-related activity (job search, education/training, job clubs, etc.)	60.2%	27.7%	7.2%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0% (N=83)
B. Percentage of caregivers who were participating in adult basic education or GED programs	7.2	49.4	39.8	1.2	0.0	2.4 (N=83)
C. Percentage of caregivers who were participating in a post-secondary education or specialized vocational training program	0.0	16.9	44.6	26.5	9.6	2.4 (N=83)

For the statements in questions 5-10, please circle the response that best reflects your opinions or experiences.

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
5. The jobs that our county's MFIP participants have found will likely be stepping stones to better jobs in the near future.	6.0%	22.6%	59.5%	10.7%	1.2%
6. Subsidized (or sliding fee) child care is readily available for clients who exit MFIP and complete their 12 months of "transition year child care."	61.9	25.0	11.9	1.2	0.0

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
7. Our county can rapidly determine what percentage of our current MFIP cases have used up a certain amount (e.g., at least 12 months) of their 60-month MFIP eligibility.	26.2%	35.7%	14.3%	17.9%	4.8%	1.2%
8. State policy should place more emphasis than it now does on ensuring that MFIP participants have appropriate skills and education before they are expected to look for work.	4.8	26.2	25.0	35.7	8.3	0.0
9. State policy should place more emphasis than it now does on upgrading the skills of MFIP caregivers who are working.	14.3	42.9	23.8	19.0	0.0	0.0
10. State policy should require applicants for MFIP assistance to engage in job search for a certain period of time before they become eligible for assistance.	3.7	13.6	14.8	48.1	19.8	0.0 (N=81)

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Note: If your county has more than one employment services provider, please select one response for each question that best reflects your county's overall impressions.

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
11. Has (or have) your employment services provider(s) <u>adequately met the needs of your county's clients in the following areas?</u>					
A. Conveyed to clients the urgency of the five-year lifetime limit on TANF benefits	66.7%	26.2%	6.0%	0.0%	1.2%
B. Conveyed to clients the importance of work	83.3	13.1	3.6	0.0	0.0
C. Assessed clients' employment barriers and strengths in a sufficient manner	51.2	36.9	11.9	0.0	0.0
D. Informed clients about education and training opportunities	57.1	35.7	6.0	0.0	1.2
E. Provided clients with a sufficient amount of structure in job search activities	40.5	36.9	14.3	3.6	4.8
F. Held clients accountable (e.g., through sanctions) for failing to meet agreed-upon expectations	51.2	38.1	9.5	1.2	0.0
G. Recruited qualified staff as job counselors	57.1	20.2	11.9	1.2	9.5

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
H. Understood the range of community resources available for clients	60.7%	29.8%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
I. Been creative in its (their) efforts to serve your county's MFIP participants	38.1	33.3	23.8	4.8	0.0
J. Developed job search and employment plans that were tailored to clients' individual needs	48.8	33.3	17.9	0.0	0.0
K. Worked with employers to develop job opportunities for clients	25.0	31.0	35.7	6.0	2.4
L. Taught clients how to look for (and apply for) jobs	65.5	27.4	4.8	1.2	1.2
M. Helped employed clients <u>keep</u> their jobs	23.8	32.1	36.9	6.0	1.2
N. Developed strategies and services to address the needs of the hardest-to-employ clients	25.0	23.8	32.1	15.5	3.6
O. Developed strategies to bring sanctioned clients into compliance	20.2	39.3	25.0	14.3	1.2
P. Helped clients enter careers in which they can achieve self-sufficiency in the long run	15.5	38.1	35.7	8.3	2.4

60-MONTH TIME LIMIT

Background: The 1996 federal welfare reform limited individual welfare recipients to 60 months of TANF benefits over the course of a lifetime—starting on July 1, 1997. Before July 1, 2002, states have the option of stopping individuals' 60-month clocks--that is, granting "extensions"--by paying for their welfare with state funds rather than TANF funds.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
12. State law should authorize stopping the 60-month clock prior to July 2002 by using state funds to pay for:						
A. One-parent families in which the caregiver is working at least 35 hours a week and two-parent families in which the caregivers are working a combined 55 hours a week.	10.7%	26.2%	15.5%	35.7%	11.9%	0.0%
B. Families in which the caregivers are exempt from MFIP employment services.	13.3	25.3	19.3	32.5	9.6	0.0 (N=83)
C. Families in which the caregivers are complying with their job search support plans or employment plans.	3.6	20.2	15.5	48.8	11.9	0.0
D. Families in which the caregivers are enrolled in post-secondary education programs and maintaining good grades and attendance.	1.2	13.3	18.1	49.4	18.1	0.0 (N=83)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
13. Minnesota should not stop the 60-month time clock for any families prior to July 1, 2002, except for those cases for which there are already exemptions in state or federal law.	35.7%	23.8%	11.9%	21.4%	6.0%	1.2%

Background: After July 1, 2002, states may choose to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseloads from the 60-month limit by reason of hardship. Currently, state law exempts relatively few categories of MFIP participants—for example, caregivers under age 20 who are complying with an education plan.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
14. For the purpose of determining which MFIP cases should be exempt from the 60-month limit in 2002,						
A. The Legislature should specify <u>in law</u> additional subgroups of participants who should be exempt.	19.0%	41.7%	7.1%	23.8%	8.3%	0.0%
B. The Department of Human Services should provide counties with <u>guidelines</u> on which participants to exempt.	26.5	32.5	9.6	18.1	13.3	0.0 (N=83)
C. Counties should develop their own criteria for judging which cases should be exempt.	3.6	8.3	7.1	32.1	48.8	0.0
D. No individual county should be allowed to have more than 20 percent of its cases exempt from the 60-month limit.	14.5	10.8	14.5	32.5	26.5	1.2 (N=83)

MISCELLANEOUS

- 15. Currently, counties may sanction MFIP participants for as much as 30 percent of the payment standard for failing to comply with program requirements. In your opinion, what (if any) change in the maximum available sanction should be implemented for:**

A. One-parent MFIP households? _____ (select one from the options listed below)

B. Two-parent MFIP households? _____ (select one from the options listed below)

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	(N=83)	
0.0%	0.0%	1.	Decrease to zero—no sanctions should be allowed under MFIP;
4.8	1.2	2.	Decrease to 10 percent;
43.4	31.3	3.	Remain at 30 percent;
28.9	34.9	4.	Increase to 50 percent;
0.0	7.2	5.	Increase to 75 percent;
20.5	22.9	6.	Increase to 100 percent;
2.4	2.4	8.	Don't know

Note for Questions 16B and 17B: According to 1999 guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the poverty threshold is \$11,060 for a family of two persons, \$13,880 for a family of three, and \$16,700 for a family of four.

	Always or Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	Don't Know or Not Applicable
16. In the past six months, single MFIP parents with <u>one or two children</u> who were seriously looking for full-time work have found jobs that:					
A. Paid enough for them to exit MFIP.	4.8%	21.7%	56.6%	16.9%	0.0% (N=83)
B. Raised their incomes above the poverty level.	3.6	19.0	61.9	14.3	1.2
17. In the past six months, single MFIP parents with <u>three or more children</u> who were seriously looking for full-time work have found jobs that:					
A. Paid enough for them to exit MFIP.	0.0	3.6	36.1	59.0	1.2 (N=83)
B. Raised their incomes above the poverty level.	1.2	4.8	39.3	52.4	2.4
18. Job counselors serving our county's MFIP clients have adequate levels of education and training.	51.8	32.5	10.8	0.0	4.8 (N=83)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
19. Across the state, there should be more uniformity in:						
A. Client assessment practices	11.9%	41.7%	13.1%	14.3%	3.6%	15.5%
B. Client sanctioning practices	25.3	41.0	13.3	6.0	3.6	10.8 (N=83)
20. The number of families moving to our county from other states to get higher welfare benefits is a significant issue in our county.	0.0	13.3	25.3	41.0	16.9	3.6 (N=83)
21. Families in 30 percent sanction for more than two months should receive home visits by:						
A. County income maintenance staff	9.5	17.9	14.3	32.1	26.2	0.0
B. County child welfare staff	15.5	33.3	19.0	20.2	10.7	1.2
C. Employment services staff	16.9	45.8	13.3	15.7	8.4	0.0 (N=83)
D. Professionals who work outside the welfare system, such as public health nurses	9.5	32.1	26.2	22.6	8.3	1.2
22. Our county has been able to get the information from the state's MAXIS system that is needed to effectively manage our welfare caseload.	15.7	36.1	15.7	24.1	8.4	0.0 (N=83)
23. Public agencies have made sufficient efforts in our county to increase the earnings of fathers who are not living in the MFIP household.	1.2	8.4	24.1	37.3	19.3	9.6 (N=83)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
24. Public agencies have made sufficient efforts to reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies in our county.	6.0%	29.8%	25.0%	21.4%	4.8%	13.1%
25. Public agencies have made sufficient efforts to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families in our county.	3.6	22.6	33.3	21.4	3.6	15.5
26. Our county has been significantly concerned about the extent to which low income parents (not on MFIP) quit work or reduce their work hours to qualify for MFIP child care services.	4.8	15.5	27.4	35.7	14.3	2.4

- 27. Please feel free to use the space below to list up to three specific suggestions for ways to improve the MFIP program - for example, changes in policies, practices, training, etc.**

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please return as soon as possible to:

**Program Evaluation Division
Office of the Legislative Auditor
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St. Paul, MN 55155**