

WELFARE 101:

busting myths about welfare



myth 01:

Welfare recipients are a drain on the system.

fact:

Today, it is more likely than ever before that your neighbor or relative collects one or more welfare benefits because of unemployment, home foreclosure, child or adult abuse or neglect, or for another reason.

In fiscal year 2009, more than 2.5 million people in Michigan – more than 25 percent of the state's residents – received one of five programs. That includes cash, food, medical, state disability or child development and care assistance.

Thousands more used benefits or services related to energy assistance, adult and child abuse or neglect, foster care or adoption, home help services or something else making the real total greater than 25 percent.

fact:

The average family receiving assistance is a single parent with two children. They receive help for a short time.

On average, that family receives Family Independence Program (FIP) cash benefits averaging \$415 a month, Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits averaging \$252 a month, Medicaid benefits and possibly Child Development and Care (child care) reimbursement for the time the parent works or attends required Work First activities. The average child care benefit is about \$610 a month.

The parent probably works part-time earning minimum wage. Between part-time income and benefits, the family may live on \$700 to \$800 a month. This places the family at about 50 percent of the federal poverty income guideline for a family of three of about \$1,526 a month.

These benefits are temporary; the average FIP client receives benefits for 21 months and the average FAP client receives benefits for 24 months.



Defining the scope and effectiveness of public assistance is difficult when people are unfamiliar with programs and services. Misunderstandings lead to myths; we prefer to discuss the facts.