

Impact of Welfare Reform on Children, Parents, Teachers, and Schools: Interprofessional Challenges and Opportunities

By Katharine Briar-Lawson

Interprofessional education and collaboration efforts of the last decade have attempted to promote improved outcomes for children, youth, and families, especially involving school achievement for impoverished children. Beginning outcomes suggest that in some school communities improvements can be seen in children's educational, health and family functioning (Wagner & Golan, 1996; Tedleman, 1996; Briar-Lawson et al., 1997). The advent of welfare reform and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) changes the lives of impoverished children, youth, and families and those who serve them. Because 67 percent of TANF recipients are children, their experiences with TANF may be felt

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in their classrooms and schools. Moreover, because employment now replaces income supports for poor families, many of the assumptions and change strategies underlying school communities as well as the helping professions may be altered. Such changes will also expand interprofessional collaboration with school communities and efforts to build improved educational, health and family outcomes.

This paper examines the implications of inter-

professional collaboration as a strategy to address TANF and the effects of welfare to work for children, youth, and families and for school communities. It offers ways in which interprofessional initiatives on behalf of impoverished children, youth, and families can help offset some of the negative outcomes that are predicted to accompany the end of their food, health, income, and educational supports. An interprofessional capacity-building mission is outlined involving employment, income supports, economic and occupational development as well as new pedagogies, internships, and demonstration projects.

Interprofessional Developments and the Poor

Over the past decade, emergent university and community collaboratives have demonstrated the ways in which once separate disciplines, professions, and their agency-based counterparts can join forces to maximize outcome effectiveness for children and families. Works of Casto and Julia (1994), Adler and Gardner (1995), Hooper-Briar and Lawson (1996), Brandon and Meuter (1995), McCroskey and Einbinder (1998), Knapp & Associates (1998), and Jones and Zlotnick (1998) among many others reflect efforts to promote integrated service delivery and professional practice paradigms. While impoverished children have not always been the explicit focus of each interprofessional venture, they nonetheless have been central to much of the good work that has transpired. For example, at Ohio State, interprofessional collaboration at the University is mirrored in a demonstration project serving impoverished neighboring communities. Similarly, McCroskey and colleagues repositioned student interns to more effectively serve poor and challenged children, families, and their neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Texas A&M University with the Bryant School District has successfully partnered with agencies and generated improved outcomes for poor children and families. As a result, the collaborative received a national award.

Many of these partnerships have involved urban Universities and communities. Increasingly, attention is turning to the parallel needs of rural communities, especially as they invent ways to better address impoverished children and families (Jones & Zlotnick, 1998). Such integrative thinking and practice involving poor families in rural communities was the focus of participants in an interprofessional conference in upper New York state.

Collaboratives that simultaneously involve universities and communities and center on poor children, families, and neighborhoods represent historic milestones in interprofessional work. Furthermore, they help position university and community partners to become major problem solvers as poor families attempt to replace welfare with employment.

Many in the interprofessional practice movement have found that categorical disciplines, services, and funding streams impede effective approaches to children and families. Yet, few if any would want to see children and families set back when

decategorized funding streams accompany policies that send children into poverty. Welfare reform through TANF can be seen as an historic opportunity or a major setback to collaborative movements to improve the lives of children and families. In fact, welfare reform, in the absence of collaborative, outcome focused practices, may prove harmful to children and families for decades to come (Einbinder, 1998).

The Advent and Implementation of TANF

With the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996, welfare parents across the nation have been told that they must find jobs. Income supports through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) no longer exist. Welfare benefits are now time limited, lasting no more than five years over a lifetime. In some states, the time limits are two or three years. Only 20 percent may remain with benefits on welfare because they have been deemed "hardship cases."

As an income support strategy for impoverished families, public assistance has been in use in the country since the advent of Mother's Pensions at the turn of the century (Blank & Blum, 1997). At that time, it was believed that no mother should be required to be a full time caregiver and full time employee. Thus with the advent of TANF, the use of employment as the sole and primary income and family support ushers in an entirely new foundation for policy, practice, scholarship, pedagogy, and research.

Few professions are prepared for the change in policy. The fate of millions of children, youth, and families depends on the capacity of parents to market their skills, secure a job, and sustain an employment-based lifestyle for themselves and their children. There are numerous challenges which may stress families.

Most jobs are in suburban communities; most TANF recipients live in urban or very rural communities. Prior to TANF, cars were an asset which prevented eligibility. Now only 7 percent of TANF families have cars; predictably transportation is seen as one the greatest barriers welfare families face in job acquisition (Derr, 1998).

Prior to TANF, welfare caseworkers functioned as clerks who determined income eligibility. With TANF, they must help families get jobs. Few welfare caseworkers have skills or educational backgrounds to promote job placement or to address complex barriers to employment. Many have no more than high school degrees. Requisite social work and job development skills may be non-existent. In fact, in many public welfare agencies, turnover is very high because of increased pressure to promote job placements and to do social work or human service related tasks.

Few community agencies and support systems including religious organizations are well prepared to be a resource to help challenged TANF families. This is because employment and income generating interventions have not been part of the repertoire of most helping professionals or agencies. Moreover, tackling labor-

market deficiencies has generally not been the focus of many interprofessional collaboratives. Thus collaborating schools, social service, and health organizations will be increasingly affected by the ripple effects of TANF as families juggle employment with caregiving or attempt to find sustainable employment that moves them out of poverty.

Magnitude and Severity of the Interprofessional Challenge

TANF is predicted to result in increasing abuse, neglect, foster care placements, and women and children in shelters (Edelman, 1997; Digre, 1997). Already, the United States Conference of Mayors (1998) has found an increase in requests for emergency food assistance of 16 percent and an increase in shelters by 59 percent. Even now, 60 percent of parents who are sanctioned (i.e., who lose some or all of their benefits) for non-compliance with local welfare regulations admit to stress-induced abuse of their children. Of those sanctioned, 60 percent believe that more schooling would help them with self sufficiency (Institute for Social Research, 1997).

At least 25 percent and as many as 50 percent of women recipients are in abusive relationships often creating traumatic stress syndromes for them and their children. Moreover, only one third of recipients are projected to find jobs that pay eight dollars an hour or more (Urban Institute, 1997).

Employment alone will not be a route out of poverty for the remaining two thirds of recipients. Child care and transportation costs alone will consume most of the earnings from minimum-wage jobs. Because less than 50 percent of recipients have finished high school and, of those, less than 50 percent read above a third-grade level, minimum wage jobs are the most likely point of entry into the workplace. It is estimated that up to 50 percent of women on welfare have learning disabilities (Giovengo, 1997). These facts alone compel innovative supports from employers, educational institutions and human service agencies to address the special barriers they face in GED and welfare to work programs.

Welfare reform was supposed to improve the lives of families (Golden, 1992). Some models for how this can happen are emerging in collaboratives around the country. For example, Berns (1998) has attempted to promote interprofessional initiatives in Colorado Springs. He has used TANF to attempt to eliminate poverty, to promote family preservation, to prevent child abuse, and to improve the quality of treatment families receive from service providers (Berns, 1998). Despite such pioneering work, thus far families collectively in only 14 states have seen benefits. According to Cook et al. (1998), others around the nation have experienced collective harms. Moreover, in some states, there are reports of thousands of families suddenly dropped from TANF. Their coping, whereabouts, and working status are unknown.

Implications for Children, Youth, and Families

Many TANF families will have very mixed emotions and experiences. Children may reflect such mixed emotions. They may be one moment excited, and then later preoccupied and even agitated over ups and downs in their parent's job search. Some children may be kept out of school so that they can fill out job applications for parents or care for siblings while parents are job hunting.

Since many welfare recipients may cycle in and out of up to three jobs a year, economic and work fluctuations may create profound crises for children, youth and families. Children, youth, and families may experience the job search and work requirements as destabilizing. In fact, the human costs and stresses of unsuccessful job searches may take a toll on parents, children, and youth. In some cases, children may manifest gastrointestinal or other somatic disorders (seen as stress related) and may seek help from the teacher or school nurse. Some youth may engage in conflictual interactions with others or become withdrawn and depressed. In some cases, unsuccessful job searches and economic insecurity may also lead to parental suicidal preoccupation, insomnia in all family members, emotional and physical abuse, and self-medicating behaviors, such as increased use and abuse of substances (Briar, 1988). Parental cardiovascular and other stress induced conditions may appear or be exacerbated. There may be a relapse with an addiction or the emergence of an immune system disorder. Some parents may move back into an abusive relationship to stabilize their economic situation, or they may turn to crime (Briar, 1988).

Stress at home may be manifested in children's runaway behavior, drug taking, and disinterest in and absenteeism from school. Parent-child conflict may erupt or intensify (Briar, 1988).

Since most TANF clients are children, schools, classrooms, and teachers will be affected. Most teachers are like 911, representing warning systems regarding the condition of children and youth. Yet, little has been done to prepare teachers or schools for the impacts on children and classrooms.

Longer-term impacts on schools may also be pronounced. The U.S. Department of Education (1993) reports that 45 percent of new-borns have one or more developmental risk factor or learning barrier. It is expected that such risk factors will increase, as half of the mothers of future newborns will not have access to prenatal care because of cuts in Medicaid. Moreover, TANF involves major cutbacks in food stamps and related nutritional programs. As a result, impoverished pregnant women will have less access to nutritional supplements and thus there may be an increased rate of low-birth-weight babies as well as babies born with disabilities and retardation. Consequently there may be increased demands for special education and other special supports and services. Nutritional cuts will also affect child development and functioning involving children's readiness to learn in school and their susceptibility to infection and disease.

Effects on Title I Schools

The impact of TANF on schools, especially Title I schools serving predominately impoverished children, may be profound, as parents are preoccupied with job search requirements and time limits for TANF. Effects of economic insecurity may be reflected in decreased parental involvement and potentially stressful interactions between parents and teachers.

It is expected that one million more children will be thrown into poverty as a result of TANF (see Einbinder, 1998). This may mean not only a sharp increase in Title I programs and schools but related barriers to learning that stem from poverty such as lack of access to glasses, hearing aids, as well as homework, housing, clothing, and nutritional supports.

**Opportunities and Potential Benefits of Welfare Reform
for Children, Youth, Families, Schools, and Teachers**

If interprofessional initiatives are accompanied by sustained investments in welfare families, pivotal and sustainable benefits may ensue. For example, work by Sherraden (1991) on Individual Development Accounts has led to the National Governor's Association adoption of the concept for welfare recipients. Nine communities are now testing these.

Research has demonstrated the benefits of work, especially involving good jobs, for self-esteem, personal interactions, improved income supports, and reduction in social isolation (Briar, 1988). For those parents who find and retain jobs, there may be stress from making ends meet, especially when there may be no medical benefits, juggling work and family with limited or no transportation to and from work, child care, children's school, and so forth. Yet despite these stresses, many parents may say that they feel better about themselves because they are working.

Successful job searches among parents may result in heightened aspirations for children and youth, more homework completion, and motivation in school, including school attendance. Schools may become hubs promoting interprofessional collaboration which ensures occupational development for parents while addressing the aspirations of children and youth. For example, school-based collaboratives may foster occupational opportunities for Title I parents by supporting parent development programs, even employment as paraprofessional teachers and health and social service aides.

Interprofessional collaboration may help position schools as outreach sites for parents to promote GED completion, community college or university enrollment, and micro enterprise development such as parent-run job clubs, barter systems, child care, or family resource centers (Alameda, 1996). Parent development models also apply to youth who may want to develop youth paraprofessional programs to do outreach to others failing in school, to truants, and to children and youth who feel

misunderstood or receive excessive discipline in school and at home.

Collaboratives may be able to initiate youth employment programs including micro enterprise development or student run school stores. One school store in New York City clears over \$40,000 a year because of the micro-enterprises of children and youth.

Banks may offer small revolving loan funds for youth and parents and be out-stationed at the school. Both parents and children may experience a heightened sense of efficacy as the job search pays off or as GED or community college course completion provides tangible benefits.

Title One Schools and Health Mental Health Screens for Every Child

Service cutbacks may necessitate that Title I schools and collaborating agencies and universities promote more supports for children. For example, a little known waiver in the Department of Health and Human Services makes it possible for every child in a Title I school to have a health and mental health screen even if each child in the school is not Medicaid eligible. Moreover, Title I funds that require a 1 percent set aside for parents. Such parent funds could be used to build occupational and educational ladders for the most challenged parents. They can run their own parent resource room and demonstrate an array of problem solving skills to reduce learning barriers for their children while providing mutual aid to one another.

Truancy and Sanctions

A number of states, such as Wisconsin, Illinois, and New York, are experimenting with the use of sanctions of parents whose children do not attend school. In the case of teen parents, sanctions are in effect if they do not attend school. While the use and impact of truancy-related sanctions are not well documented, it is clear that when families do not have the requisite income to support their well-being, the effects can be profoundly hurtful especially when they are spread across children as well as adults. In fact, it has been argued that with many truants, parents have lost control over the youth and they and all their children are often penalized when what the youth needs is special supports and services. For example, the Learnfare program of Wisconsin, tying benefits to school attendance for teen parents, demonstrated only marginal improvements (Harandi, 1995). On the other hand, interprofessional initiatives have had demonstrable effects on truancy. Thus, the absence of collaboration among multiple systems and service providers may have weakened the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Implications for Parental Education

Collaborating universities, colleges, and P-12 schools can play strategic roles in mitigating some of the predictable human costs of joblessness, poverty, and welfare terminations. In fact, education-based initiatives have been shown, time

and again, to be the greatest source of long term economic independence (Gueron & Pauley, 1991; Harris, 1991). Historically the most direct route out of poverty has been higher education (Gittell & Covington, 1993). This is especially true for women whose income equals that of men with high school degrees only when they have acquired a bachelor's degree from college. Moreover, the intergenerational effects of both education and employment are often profound (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995). Children of college-educated parents are more likely to complete higher education. Similarly, longitudinal research shows that when a single parent mother is employed during a child's school years, the probability of children dropping out of school may decrease by 43 percent; in turn, the likelihood that the child will be employed rather than on welfare increases significantly (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995).

Current welfare regulations prevent most recipients from attending more than one or two years of college, especially if it is not vocationally-relevant education. In fact, a number of states do not permit vocational education as part of the self-sufficiency supports for welfare recipients. Nonetheless, several states have taken the lead in promoting community college and university collaboration to aid with higher education. For example, in some states, community colleges are collaborating with welfare-to-work programs, serving as one-stop job and educational support centers (Cohen, 1998). Because some state welfare dictates preclude higher education, employers may become an alternative route to educational access and support.

Collaboratives with the Private Sector

Most university-community interprofessional collaboratives have involved public sector agencies such as schools and social and health services. Increasingly, with TANF, interprofessional collaboratives will need to involve private-sector employers. These employers may be the key routes to higher education for many recipients and the working poor. Interprofessional initiatives need to test the growing notion that networks of institutions (such as P-12, community colleges, and universities along with employers) are far more effective in job and educational supports than stand-alone institutions (Harrison & Weiss, 1998).

Employers, collaborating with higher education and human service agencies, may increasingly become the new route to promoting educational as well as occupational supports for welfare recipients (Permuter, 1997). In states with fewer in the "surplus labor pool," employers may become the front-line investors in the return to school for former welfare clients.

Collaboratives comprising employers, educational institutions, human service agencies, and TANF recipients themselves can build new pathways to higher education. For example, these collaborators can foster self help resource guides to higher education. These guides can be written with an eye toward distribution in local companies that hired and may now want to help build occupational and educational ladders for their workers. College and university students, some who are current and

former recipients, can be recruited to serve as collaborators on such handbooks. These can address how to use school to become economically self-sufficient while building individualized occupational and educational ladders. These self-help handbooks could also inventory the local colleges and universities, their admissions policies, fee waivers available for impoverished individuals, the types of occupations they promote in their curricula, and the years of experience and education required for various occupations, as well as for supports on campuses such as free transportation and subsidized child care. Such handbooks could also address the role of mentors and how to use one; how to think in short and long term plans about dreams, aspirations, job, and educational ladders; how to engage work supervisors to be supportive of these short and long term goals; how to cope with the stresses of balancing work, school and family roles; and how to identify and use "time-dollar" bartering options.

Ladders For The Poor

Despite growing interprofessional partnerships within institutions of higher education and the impoverished communities in which they reside, many educational institutions have neglected to provide occupational and educational ladders for impoverished families. To this end, interprofessional initiatives can design and implement educational and occupational ladders for current or former welfare recipients through targeted outreach, recruitment, support, and retention strategies. Support groups for students can be fostered as well as bartering to assist with child care and transportation. Interprofessional collaboratives can document and address the special barriers and innovations addressing the needs of these undeserved populations. Interprofessional ladders may include:

INTERNSHIPS (especially for hardship welfare recipients in order to gain skills and build aspirations)

- ◆ volunteering at a local school, working as a parent aides, teacher aides, family resource and support workers; recovery aides helping others with addictions.

SKILL, JOB AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

- ◆ acquiring a certificate to work in a child care center, or to be a child care provider.
- ◆ taking or tutoring in GED classes.

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATION ASSESSMENT

- ◆ taking vocational tests at a local community college.
- ◆ setting short and long term educational and occupational goals.

JOB SEEKING SUPPORTS

- ◆ running a job club or promoting job seeking and the attainment of an entry level job.

DESIGNING THE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LADDER

- ◆ designing a work plan to continue schooling and occupational advancement.
- ◆ joining or running "ladder" support groups promoted by local colleges and universities.

LADDER SUPPORTS

- ◆ working with a mentor or setting up mentoring by a local college or university.
- ◆ recruitment and retention supports once in school.

**Promoting "First Call"
on Resources, Access, and Mentoring**

Interprofessional initiatives can build capacity in institutions of higher education for recipients to have "first call" or intensified, accelerated access to admissions, child care, career supports (such as vocational testing), and tuition assistance. Educational access can be fostered with assistance with applications to local universities, testing for educational and vocational preferences, a mentor from each university or college assigned to the applicant. Mentors can be recruited from a network of collaborating college and university campuses. Mentors can meet monthly with their assigned student. In some cases, such mentors will be faculty who because of their mentoring may rethink their pedagogies, theories and strategies of instruction relating to marginalization due to race, poverty, gender, classism and so forth.

***Interprofessional Initiatives Can Spawn
New Service and Outcome Strategies***

States have now reached the point at which many of those on welfare who can get jobs have moved out into them. Those who remain on welfare face challenges that are multiple, persistent, and may require innovative new service approaches. Interprofessional initiatives can combine occupational and educational ladderizing with the design and invention of new practice models. Teaming with front-line welfare caseworkers and work units, students from the allied helping professions can be placed in pilot units. These can be in schools or in public welfare offices. Students can work together with staff to design service innovations, and to promote data driven documentation of how each employability and educational access barrier was successfully overcome. Moreover, the entire invention process can draw on the expertise of paraprofessionals—often former clients serving as resource mobilizers, motivators, facilitators of service, and employment follow through. Several promising features of this proposed design strategy include the fact that "hard to serve" families can also support one another in job club and related support services, such as sobriety maintenance, follow through on counseling, and group mentoring.

Such interprofessional internships and demonstration projects will also help to promote not only new service designs to overcome employability barriers but will foster new knowledge about the differing requisite service levels, designs, types, and service duration (and need for boosters) to increase the employability for "hard-to-serve" families. Because service designs can be invented, crafted, and tested by

selected work units and workers, the likelihood of success is heightened since work units will serve as "centers of innovation." Moreover, this allows work units to tailor to their own unique labor market challenges some of the innovations in employability supports, thereby increasing not only the diversity of effective approaches that can be replicated elsewhere but ensuring that this is not an attempt to make "one size fit all."

Universities and Colleges as Employers

Universities and colleges are major employers themselves. It may be possible to increase the number of impoverished adults who are employed in these colleges. This interprofessional work builds upon some of the successful features of New Careers from programs of the 1960s. It fosters new roles and jobs in child care, parent resource centers, and community development initiatives, such as transportation innovations. It also builds on innovations from Goddard College and related college level institutions that have invested in access and supports for impoverished single parents.

Promoting Other Income and Related Resources

There are promising activities underway in both income-generating and related work that can augment the outreach role of interprofessional collaboratives. For example, many working poor are eligible for Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC). This amounts to income supplements of \$2500 or more for parents and children serving as an "aid in wages" if working full or part-time. Every school, health, and social service agency can facilitate each family in their receipt of these entitlements. Unaware of the entitlement, millions of poor working families go without access and income supports of the EITC.

In addition, for the past decade, bartering in the form of a time-dollar system has helped to reculture and build impoverished communities. The Grace Hill community in East St. Louis may be best known for its innovations. Neighbors not only run their own neighborhood colleges but exchange over 40,000 hours in care and support of one another. This makes it possible for their limited earnings to be used for what bartering cannot buy. Even local shopkeepers now honor bartered work converted to "time-dollars" as a form of currency. One college also enables students to enroll based on their time dollars and bartered work. Many more universities and colleges can promote interprofessional support for the impoverished student and parent to access education with such time dollar arrangements.

Micro credit has gained increasing respectability in developing nations as such Bangladesh. Banks and related credit lending institutions have major roles to play in promoting collectives, cooperatives, and small businesses among the working poor. Banks need to be partners in the welfare-to-work, education, and self-sufficiency strategies of the future.

Development of Promising New Curricular Strategies

Einbinder (1998) argues that in response to TANF, faculty will be called upon to change their teaching, scholarship, and community service. According to Einbinder, they will need to address new professional roles among service providers, as well as to document the impacts of TANF.

Pedagogical contributions may involve the use of former and current recipients as knowledge generators and even co-teachers in college and university classrooms regarding the barriers and challenges faced in moving to economic self-sufficiency. This pedagogy recognizes that half the expertise regarding welfare reform and self-sufficiency lies with those who are closest to the problem and challenge. It is their expertise and findings that will need to be privileged to build a more inclusive model for a new century college and university. This involves building on the expertise of those who in the past have been the "subjects" of the material, theory, and research, to now be co-designers and facilitators of it when it is imparted. This will help to reduce stereotypes and improve and correct the discourse, which often equates poverty with "dysfunctional families." Such labels will not be acceptable as these pioneering recipients and new workers are co-presenters in classrooms. Instead the heroic feats that they have had to accomplish, their resiliency, and their own theories about success and barriers will become part of the discourse and curricular reforms. Curricular innovations may also include courses on new challenges to surviving poverty, how to create college and university fostered collectives and cooperatives through micro-enterprise development in public and private sectors (child care centers, car repair, family resource centers, culturally preserving enterprises), and time-dollar initiatives such as formal bartering systems.

Curricular reforms may also be generated by interprofessional collaboration since all helping disciplines will seek to more effectively address some facet of what it means to be poor and its effects on life functioning. Defining new interventions, research, and community service in interprofessional terms, because no discipline alone can address or solve the challenges of poverty, may create a new foundation for more effective practices, policies, research, and service strategies for the future. New theoretical work may also evolve. For example, Gardner (1998) has called for a new theory of resources to accompany the work of academic and community collaboratives.

A Turning Point in the Interprofessional Movement

This multidimensional collaborative strategy addresses some of the stress and challenge faced by impoverished children and their parents. It simultaneously focuses on children, the predominant recipients of welfare, while investing in their parents. It promotes more economically diverse student bodies on campuses while positioning colleges and universities to be resources in welfare to work and self-

sufficiency schemes. It also brings faculty closer to the realities of the welfare and working poor so that their research, teaching and community service can be more relevant and impact future policy and practice developments.

Interprofessional leaders and facilitators cannot be mere bystanders as parents, children, schools, and teachers struggle to cope with unprecedented changes and crises. Interprofessional capacity building with children, parents, and their school communities can mirror the best of the helping professions as they join forces to address one of the greatest challenges of the century to all the helping disciplines.

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