

In Harm's Way? Domestic Violence, AFDC Receipt, and Welfare Reform in Massachusetts

Key Findings

During legislative welfare reform debates, members of the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence raised concerns about the potential effects of the recent changes in welfare laws and regulations on the risk of domestic violence among poor women and the effects they might have on battered women and their children who receive or seek public assistance. In 1995, the Commission approached researchers at the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston to undertake a study of the intersection of welfare receipt and domestic violence. The University of Massachusetts Boston's Center for Survey Research carefully designed a survey and, with access provided by the Department of Transitional Assistance, between January and June, 1996 interviewed a representative sample of 734 women who receive Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC). This is the first survey in the nation to interview a solid, representative sample of the total AFDC caseload in a state that incorporates carefully designed measures of both current and past domestic violence.

The most important and troubling finding from this survey is that there is a very high prevalence of domestic violence among the TAFDC population. One-fifth of the TAFDC population has been abused by a current or former husband or boyfriend in the past year and nearly two-thirds have ever been abused, using the definition of domestic violence provided by Massachusetts law under the 1978 Abuse Prevention Act.

A substantial percentage of women who reported being abused have been embroiled in disagreements with current or former husbands or boyfriends about child support, visitation, and custody in the past twelve months. Well over half of abused women have ever taken out a restraining order against a current or former boyfriend or husband and the majority report ever calling the police because of being hurt or threatened by a current or former boyfriend or husband, with almost one-fifth having called in the past year.

Data from the survey reveal that abused women differ from non-abused women in a few critical areas. Abused women were much more likely to have been married, more likely to have lower self-esteem, greater emotional distress, and more physical disabilities themselves and among their children than women who were not abused.

The survey results point to the importance of taking domestic violence into account when designing and administering programs accessed by low-income women and their families, especially TAFDC. The authors explore the implications of the high prevalence of domestic violence among TAFDC recipients for the new welfare reform legislation, considering ways in which the new regulations might increase the risk for women and their children.

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Executive Summary

The federal government and the Massachusetts state legislature recently enacted sweeping welfare reforms. Among the significant changes are time limits for receipt of public assistance, work requirements, stricter paternity reporting rules, and the end of the federal guarantee of assistance to needy families. Together, these reforms are intended to provide the incentives for adults (almost exclusively women) with children who receive public assistance to find paid work as quickly as possible.

During the Massachusetts debate concerning welfare reform, groups who work with victims of domestic violence voiced concern over some of the changes and the potential impact they might have among families who receive public assistance and have experienced domestic violence. Representatives of the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups met with key officials within the Department of Public Welfare (now called the Department of Transitional Assistance, DTA) to better understand the scope of this problem. Members of the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence formed a working group to further examine welfare reform and to ascertain if it unintentionally posed risks to domestic violence victims receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, now called TAFDC -- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Facing a distinct lack of information, in the spring of 1995, the working group asked the Center for Social Policy Research at the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston to undertake a study of the prevalence of domestic violence among the TAFDC population. The University of Massachusetts Boston's Center for Survey Research carefully designed a survey and, with access provided by the Department of Transitional Assistance, interviewed a representative sample of 734 women who receive Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) between January and June, 1996.

The new state law, passed in February 1995, required every AFDC recipient to reapply for assistance, which presented an ideal opportunity to interview a scientific sample of women that would be representative of the state's entire welfare caseload. This is the first survey of its kind and the only one to date that is representative of any state's AFDC population. The survey instrument, techniques, and sampling procedure used constitute the best national study ever conducted to document the extent of domestic violence among women receiving public assistance in any state.

The most important and troubling finding from this survey is that there is a very high prevalence of domestic violence among the TAFDC population in Massachusetts.

A summary of the major findings are:

A substantial percentage of women receiving TAFDC are recent victims of domestic violence.

- < *One fifth of the women interviewed experienced abuse by a husband or boyfriend or former husband or boyfriend within the past twelve months, using the definition of domestic violence provided by Massachusetts law under the 1978 Abuse Prevention Act. In this study, a woman is counted as abused if she indicated had been subjected to one of the following six behaviors by a current or former husband or boyfriend: hit, slapped or kicked; thrown or shoved onto the floor, against a wall, or down stairs; hurt badly enough to go to the doctor, used a gun, knife or other object in a way that made her afraid; forced to have sex or engaged in sexual activity against her will; or made to think she may be hurt.*

Domestic violence is more the rule than the exception in the lives of Massachusetts TAFDC recipients.

- < *Most of the women surveyed, 64.9 percent, have been victims of domestic violence by a boyfriend or husband or former boyfriend or husband.*
- < *When the definition of domestic violence also includes experience of verbal or emotional abuse, isolation from family or friends, and being deprived of control over possessions, the percentage rises to 70.3.*
- < *Using a very conservative criterion of strict physical violence (hit, slapped, kicked; thrown, shoved; or hurt badly enough to go to a doctor), 57.7 percent reported at least one of those things had happened to them at the hands of a current or former boyfriend at some time in their lives.*

Abused women differ from non-abused women in a few critical respects.

- < *A substantial percentage of women who reported being abused are embroiled in disagreements with current or former husbands or boyfriends.*

Almost one third (29.2 percent) report problems or arguments with a man about child support within the twelve months prior to the interview.

Problems or arguments about visitation were reported by 23.7 percent of the women, and problems or arguments about custody were reported by 14.7 percent. Well over half (54.6 percent) have taken out a restraining order against a current or former boyfriend or husband. Nearly a third of those (33.0 percent), which is 18.0 percent of the total sample, have had a restraining order in effect in the past year.

The majority (56.2 percent) report calling the police because of being hurt or threatened by a current or former boyfriend or husband, while 18.0 percent had called in the past year.

- < *Abused women were much more likely to report that they were exposed to violence as children in their homes.*

Over a third (35.4 percent) of women reporting abuse, compared to 17.4 percent of

those never abused, reported that an adult in their household kicked, bit or hit them with a fist, hit or tried to hit them with something, beat up, choked, burned or scalded them. A similar percentage (33.5 for abused and 15.1 for non-abused) reported these occurrences between the adults in their household.

- < *Abused women are more likely to have ever been married (47.1 percent for abused versus 31.8 for non-abused) and, on average, are more likely to have had their first child at a younger age (20.4 for abused versus 21.1 years non-abused).*
- < *White women are more likely to report that they have ever been abused than are non-white women in the sample: 75.2 percent of white, 54.3 percent of Hispanic, 57.3 percent of African American, and 63.0 percent of women of other race/ethnicity report abuse.*
- < *Women reporting abuse are significantly more likely to have a child with an on-going disability that limits the child's activity and to report that they themselves have a physical disability, handicap, or other serious physical, mental or emotional problems*
- < *While almost all TAFDC recipients (88.3 percent) have held a job, those who reported abuse are slightly more likely to have worked (90.9 percent versus 83.3 percent) and to have worked full-time (73.5 percent versus 64.5 percent) than those who did not report abuse. Abused women were also much more likely to report that a current or former boyfriend would not like them to go to school or work (15.5 percent versus 1.6 percent).*
- < *Women who reported being abused had significantly lower well being and psychological resources than women not reporting abused. Abused women were much more likely to have lower self-esteem, less sense of mastery, and show more symptoms of emotional distress.*

Many characteristics of women who have suffered domestic violence are not statistically different from those who have not. These include: educational or current training status; age; number of children; living in a shelter, in public housing, or receiving government subsidy; and expressing an interest in going to work or school.

There are very few, but important, differences in the characteristics of recently abused women and women who were abused prior to the past year, but not within the past year

- < *Women who reported recent abuse, compared to those who were abused prior to the last year, are more likely to have argued with a man over custody, visitation, or support in the past year, to have had a restraining order in effect, and to have called the police due to threat or injuries within the last twelve months.*
- < *Recently abused women have lower self-esteem, less sense of mastery, and more emotional distress than women who were abused prior to the past year.*

This survey confirms that the prevalence of domestic violence among women receiving TAFDC is staggeringly high and it is not an isolated phenomenon. This suggests that several aspects of the new welfare reform legislation are likely to create impediments to economic self-sufficiency and might even create situations that further harm victims of domestic violence.

- < The stigmatization of welfare receipt and many new requirements contained in Massachusetts and federal welfare reform might discourage women from seeking public assistance or prevent them from receiving it. Welfare reform may unintentionally serve to keep some women from leaving an abusive situation or may cause some to return to one.
- < The requirement of finding work or a workfare placement within two months of receipt of assistance (for women whose youngest child is school age) may not be safe for current or recent victims of domestic violence and may not be achievable for severely traumatized victims of domestic violence.
- < For some recent or severely traumatized families, the state's limit of 24 months (over a five year period) and the federal life-time limit of five years for receipt of public assistance may not be long enough. Many scenarios that accompany domestic violence, such as stalking or severe depression, suggest that a strict cut-off may be unrealistic and possibly harmful.
- < The data reported here reveal that many abused women are currently in active conflict over custody, child support, and visitation. Heightened enforcement of paternity reporting and the consequences of establishing paternity (e.g., a father's right to seek visitation) could activate or reactivate contact and conflicts with abusive former partners and may prove dangerous -- if not fatal -- for some women and their children.

Research on the impact of domestic violence consistently shows that it has severe emotional and physical ramifications for women and their children for many years, comparable to those of survivors of other types of trauma. The long-term effects of domestic violence include severe depression, anxiety, and physical illness. The current policies coupled with the known effects of domestic violence on the lives of its victims suggest that a large number of TAFDC recipients may well be unable, although not necessarily unwilling, to comply with at least some of the major components of the new welfare laws and regulations. Recipients could lose much needed income (if they are sanctioned for non-compliance, or dropped from the welfare rolls after reaching time limits) and may return to abusive situations. Without attention to these issues, the state will fail to provide programs that allow many women to replace public assistance with earnings -- the stated goal of welfare reform -- and may possibly face reduced federal funds if federal work participation ratios are not met.

Given these findings, the Commonwealth should create a program that can effectively deal with the consequences of domestic violence. The goal should be to create a TAFDC program that: promotes safety and does not increase the risk from batterers; does not present additional barriers or impediments for women and children leaving an abusive situation; and provides opportunities for women and their children to recover and become self-sufficient. To meet these goals requires a careful examination of current TAFDC policies (and perhaps other programs that serve low-income women and their families as well) toward victims of domestic violence.

One first step should be the adoption of the Family Violence Amendment to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act that would allow the Commonwealth to waive any federal or state requirements that make it more difficult for women to escape situations of domestic violence or that unfairly penalize a parent or child who has been a victim of domestic violence.

In Harm's Way?

Domestic Violence, AFDC Receipt, and Welfare Reform in Massachusetts

1. Introduction

In a relatively short period, the major policy affecting women and children living in poverty, established in 1935 -- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) -- was transformed at the state and federal levels. The Massachusetts welfare reform law, Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995, put into place a wide range of changes, while the recently passed Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193) replaced the federal provisions of AFDC with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. The state changes intentionally made receiving public assistance without work effort much more difficult, while the federal bill ended the guaranteed public responsibility to individuals and families needing financial assistance due to inadequate income. The main focus of both state and federal legislation has been on time limits, work requirements, and stricter paternity reporting rules. Some, but much less, attention has been paid to child care issues and other factors affecting psychological well-being and the social environment in which poor women and children live.

An important concern raised during the welfare debate at both the federal level and in some states was the prevalence of domestic violence among those who received AFDC. Advocates, journalists, and others have highlighted contradictions in federal policies that, on one hand, seek to increase funds to combat domestic violence while, on the other hand, restrict the availability of public assistance for those fleeing domestic violence (Ehrenreich 1995; Jordan 1995). The 1994 Violence Against Women Act provided a federal civil rights remedy for victims of violence and funding for domestic violence initiatives, but the conversion of the AFDC entitlement to a block grant did not directly address the problem of domestic violence, although states can adopt a certification of standards and procedures that will ensure that the state screen and identify domestic violence (the Family Violence Option). Without a clear and comprehensive federal approach to the problem of domestic violence and welfare, it is now up to the states to decide how to respond to this issue.

For the past several decades, researchers have compiled impressive information about domestic violence. The literature describes various social and psychological effects that domestic

violence has on its victims and their children. And, while many practitioners have known about the existence of domestic violence among AFDC recipients, understanding the magnitude of the prevalence of domestic violence among welfare recipients and developing policies to respond to it has seldom been addressed. Jody Raphael of the Taylor Institute in Chicago, Illinois has been a primary champion of these issues and has called for action. In an informal survey of 15 states, Raphael found much anecdotal information about domestic violence and welfare, but stressed that an analysis of the extent of domestic violence and the characteristics of women on AFDC was critical (Raphael 1995).

Those working on the issue of domestic violence in Massachusetts have serious concerns with the potential impact of welfare reform for women who are or were victims of domestic violence. Frustrated that there was little valid and reliable information about the prevalence of domestic violence within the Massachusetts AFDC caseload at the time, representatives of the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups began meeting with key officials within the (then) Department of Public Welfare to think about how to better understand the scope of this problem (Stiles 1995). Members of the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, including representatives from the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups, formed an AFDC¹ Working Group to further examine welfare reform and to ascertain if it unintentionally posed a risk to domestic violence victims receiving AFDC. An important first step before making any recommendations to change the welfare reform law was to document the percentage of recipients who were victims of domestic violence.

In the spring of 1995, the AFDC¹ Working Group of the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence asked the Center for Social Policy Research of the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston to study the prevalence of domestic violence among TAFDC recipients. The Center for Survey Research of the University of Massachusetts Boston designed a survey and, with access provided by the Department of Transitional Assistance, interviewed a representative sample of 734 women who were receiving Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) between January and June, 1996. This is the first comprehensive survey of domestic violence among a representative sample of a state's AFDC recipients.

The major finding of the survey is very troubling: One out of every five female TAFDC

¹ Massachusetts welfare reform legislation, passed in February 1995, renamed the Department of Welfare to Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and its AFDC program to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Families (TAFDC).

adult recipients in Massachusetts has been abused by a former or current boyfriend or husband within the last twelve months according to the definition of violence provided by Massachusetts law under the 1978 Abuse Prevention Act. Two out of every three TAFDC recipients have at some point in their lives been victims of domestic violence. As extraordinary as these findings may seem, they are comparable to other studies of the AFDC population and similar to more anecdotal reports or qualitative studies.

Our study confirms that domestic violence is a critical factor in the lives of the majority of women and children receiving TAFDC in Massachusetts. Without attention to domestic violence and the short-term risks and long-term consequences on the emotional and psychological lives of its victims, changes in welfare rules and regulations could increase the risk to current or previous victims and could fail to assist recipients in their transition to self-sufficiency. The very high likelihood of domestic violence in the lives of the population of women and children who receive public assistance is of great concern. Massachusetts policy makers and administrators should move to assure that, as they shape and administer the state and new federal programs -- Transitional Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) -- they also promote safety. They must not increase the risk from batterers, nor present additional barriers or impediments for women and children leaving an abusive situation. Finally, opportunities must be provided for women and their children to recover and become economically self-sufficient.

This report is organized into four major sections: a review of some of the key aspects of domestic violence and AFDC; a report on some of the major findings of the statewide survey; a discussion of the impact of domestic violence on poverty and welfare reform efforts; and a discussion of possible next steps.

2. The Nature and Extent of Domestic Violence

Definitions and Prevalence

The definition of domestic violence varies across studies (Laurence and Spalter-Roth 1996) and is often used interchangeably with the terms intimate violence and family violence (Gelles 1990). As Miller and Wellford (1997) note, domestic or intimate violence "is neither uniformly nor universally defined" (p.16). Domestic or intimate violence is often defined narrowly to convey physical assaults that can cause physical harm or that are carried out with the perceived intention of physically hurting another person, such as threats to kill or harm (Browne 1993; Gelles 1990). A broader definition, however, includes not only battering -- the actual physical assault on another person (i.e., hitting, punching, and striking) -- but also a wide range of harmful behaviors such as sexual coercion, mental abuse and control, threats, insults, isolation, denial of access to resources and property destruction (Pagelow 1984; Walker 1979; Laurence and Spalter-Roth 1996; Browne 1993; White 1985). Increasingly, the definition of domestic violence includes all intimate relationships, not just married couples (Laurence and Spalter-Roth 1996).

There is no common definition of domestic violence among Massachusetts public agencies. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) has adopted a definition that includes: "[Domestic violence is] the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse. It occurs along a continuum of severity and the offender may use physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, economic oppression, isolation, threats, intimidation and maltreatment of the children to control the other person". (Massachusetts DSS 1994).

For this study, we adhere to the narrower definition provided by Chapter 209A, the 1978 Abuse Prevention Act for Massachusetts, that defines abuse as those acts that can lead to, among other actions, the issuance of a restraining order. These include:

- 1) attempting to cause or causing physical harm;
- 2) placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm; and
- 3) causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat of force, or duress.

Developing accurate estimates of the overall prevalence and incidence of domestic violence is difficult and reflects variations in study methodologies, such as analyses of clinical populations versus large-scale randomized surveys, and underrepresentation of specific subgroups such as single, low-income women and women of color. It is also well known that there is an overall underreporting of abuse by victims because of fear of retaliation, economic dependence, internalized shame and complications with children (Miller and Wellford 1997; Karp and Karp 1994). In her recent review of domestic violence studies, Susan Lloyd notes that a "conservative interpretation suggests that approximately two to three million intimate partner assaults occur annually" (1996, p.1). Similarly, Susan Miller and Charles Wellford conclude that "Incidence rates [of intimate violence] range from 16 percent, using nationally representative household surveys, to 50 percent based on victimization surveys and interviews" (1997, p. 18).

Table 1 provides an overview of the major household surveys of domestic violence conducted both in the United States and in Canada. These surveys are categorized by their primary focus: family violence, crime and women's health and, where available, if the abuse occurred within the past 12 months or ever as an adult. As is evident from the table, despite the variations in methodology, the rate of domestic violence in this country and Canada is high. The 1975 and 1985 national Family Violence Surveys found over 25 percent of married couples reporting at least one physical assault occurring between them (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz 1980; Straus and Gelles 1990), while a Harris poll conducted during the same time period found 20% of all women reporting at least one physical attack by a male partner as an adult (Schulman 1979).

In order to provide estimates of the prevalence of domestic violence in Massachusetts, Susan Schechter and Lisa Mihaly (1992) extrapolated data from the 1985 Straus and Gelles national survey and 1990 Census data. Using those data, the authors estimate that in 1991, 43,000 married and cohabitating women in Massachusetts experienced severe violence -- kicks, punches, beatings and stabbings and an additional 149,000 women were pushed and slapped. These numbers, however, are not reliable for single, separated or divorced women in the Commonwealth, since the Straus and Gelles survey includes only intact couples.

Domestic violence expert Angela Browne, in summing up the extensive literature on incidence claims, "Experts now believe that the true incidence of violence between married partners might be double the existing estimates -- or four million women severely assaulted each year -- and that one in every three women will be physically attacked by a male partner at least once during adulthood" (Browne 1997, p. 49).

TABLE 1
Examples of General Prevalence Surveys of Domestic Violence¹

Author/Focus	Sample	Experienced Violence Ever	Experienced Violence Past 12 Months
<i>Primary focus: Family violence</i>			
Shulman (1979)	1,793 women	21.0%	
Straus & Gelles (1990)	2,143 families	28.0%	121/1,000 couples
Straus & Gelles (1990)	6,002 families	22.0%	113/1,000 couples ²
Rodgers (1994) (National Survey on Violence Against Women--Canada)	12,300 women	29.0% (physical or sexual abuse by marital partner); 50.0% since the age of 16	3.0%
<i>Primary focus: Crime</i>			
Bachman & Saltzman (1995) (reporting on Redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey, 1992 and 1993; U.S. Department of Justice)	Approximately 50,000 households 100,000 individuals age 12+		9.4% (victimization by an intimate; average annual rate per 1,000 persons) ³
<i>Primary focus: Women's health</i>			
The Commonwealth Fund (1993)	2,525 women		7.0% physically abused; 37% verbally/ emotionally abused ⁴

¹ This table was adapted from Laurence and Spalter-Roth (1996) and Lloyd (1996).

² This rate is based on total violence between marital couples (including cohabitating couples). The citation for Straus & Gelles provides summary information on their 1975 National Family Violence Survey and the 1985 National Family Violence Resurvey.

³ This rate of violence by an intimate (spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend) translates into 1 million women who became victims during this two year period (this figure does not include homicides); another 500,000 rapes and sexual assaults were reported by women. This survey is based on crimes, including incidents not reported to the police.

⁴ The corresponding population figure is approximately 4 million women physically abused and 21 million verbally or emotionally abused. These figures do not include 2 percent (1.9 million) women reporting being raped.

Domestic Violence Among Low-Income Families and AFDC Recipients

Domestic violence cuts across all racial, ethnic, income, and religious lines. According to reported crime statistics and household survey data, domestic violence is disproportionately more prevalent among low-income groups (Moore 1997). There are several reasons why this might be the case. One obvious reason is that low-income people have less access to other legal alternatives, so are more likely to report incidences directly to the police. Another reason is that poverty is enormously stressful. And while there are many reasons why domestic violence persists, increased stress, particularly economic stress, is one of them.

Leaving a battering situation requires that a safe, long-term alternative living arrangement be available for a woman and her children. For women with few financial resources this is a major impediment. Women living in poverty are at especially high risk for severe and life-threatening assaults (Browne 1997). Table 2 provides an overview of studies that target women living in poverty, many of whom are on AFDC, and their relationship to domestic violence. One of the more recent studies is Susan Lloyd's (1996) examination of the effects of violence on women's employment in one low-income Chicago neighborhood. Women experiencing violence did not differ significantly with respect to their current employment status from those who did not report abuse. Further, Lloyd found that "over half (55.1%) of the women who reported having experienced physical aggression in the past 12 months ... had received AFDC benefits during that time, compared to 33.3% of the sample." (p. 16)

In 1995, the Passaic County, New Jersey Board of Social Services developed a questionnaire to track the prevalence of domestic violence in its welfare-to-work program. Table 2 underscores the magnitude of violence in that county's AFDC population, with 57 percent reporting having ever been physically abused and 14 percent reporting physical abuse within the previous twelve months (Curcio 1996).

Researchers from the Better Homes Foundation conducted a study of 226 homeless and 216 housed, low-income women in Worcester, Massachusetts. Almost all the participants were receiving AFDC. Approximately two-thirds reported assault by a partner at some time in their lives. They found very little difference between the rates of domestic violence for homeless women and those who were low-income but housed. Most of the women in both of these groups also experienced serious violence by parents or other caretakers during childhood and as adults (Bassuk, Browne, and Buckner 1996).

The only recent statewide survey of AFDC recipients that also asked about domestic

violence was conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy as part of its Fifth Annual Family Income Study. Over half of the women on AFDC reported abuse as adults (Roper and Weeks 1993). This study did not distinguish between current and past abuse.

The most comprehensive review of available data and information on domestic violence in the lives of AFDC recipients can be found in two studies by the Taylor Institute. The Institute's January 1995 report presented data on twelve grass roots job training programs, establishing a connection between current and past domestic violence and long-term welfare receipt (Raphael 1995). In a follow-up study, Raphael (1996) presents additional data documenting the extent of domestic violence in welfare-to-work programs' caseloads. The percentage of domestic violence among welfare-to-work participants is very high across all of the programs. Raphael describes how women come to many of these programs with black eyes or other visible forms of abuse. Based on the percent of enrollees affected by domestic violence in their program (approximately 20 percent), the Family Support and Education Center in Cecil County, Maryland linked up with the local domestic violence center to provide services directly at the jobs program site.

The main limitation in all of these studies, however, is their lack of representativeness of the entire AFDC population and the way in which they measure domestic violence. This survey, conducted by University of Massachusetts Boston researchers, addresses these limitations. It is the first in the nation to have a solid representative sample of the total AFDC caseload in a state, rather than participants in selected programs, that incorporated carefully designed measures of both current and past domestic violence. We now turn to the survey and the findings.

TABLE 2
A Summary of Other Surveys of Poverty and Domestic Violence

Author/Focus/Date	Sample	Ever Experienced Domestic Violence	Experienced Domestic Violence in Past Year
<i>Primary focus: Intimate violence and women's employment</i>			
Lloyd (1996)	Random sample of 824 low-income adult women in Chicago, IL		11.9% total sample 52.9% AFDC recipients
<i>Primary focus: Epidemiologic study of homelessness and poverty</i>			
Bassuk et al (1996)	220 homeless and 216 housed low-income women in Worcester, MA	63.3% homeless women 58.1% housed, low-income women	
<i>Primary focus: Welfare use</i>			
Roper and Weeks (1993)	1,184 AFDC recipients and 796 at-risk women in Washington State	60.0% AFDC recipients 35.0% At-risk sample	
<i>Primary focus: AFDC and violence</i>			
Curcio (1996)	614 AFDC recipients in Passaic County, NJ	57.0% physical abuse 66.0% verbal/emotional abuse	14.0% physical abuse 25.0% verbal/emotional abuse
<i>Primary focus: Welfare-to-work and violence</i>			
Raphael (1995) (12 community-based job training programs; two highlighted here)	90 participants entering program on July 1, 1994; Chicago Commons West Humboldt Training Center	84.0%	58.0%
	91 heads of households; Mid-Iowa Community Action	51.0%	22.0%

3. Domestic Violence Among Massachusetts TAFDC Recipients: Survey Findings

One change in the recent welfare reform in Massachusetts required all recipients to undergo a recertification process in order to continue receiving benefits. As part of that process, all recipients had a redetermination interview with their caseworker at their local Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) office. Women were interviewed for this study in the offices on the day of their redetermination interviews. When the survey was first administered, the Massachusetts DTA had 42 local offices (since that time some have been consolidated). Forty offices were included in the study; the very small and difficult to reach offices on the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard were excluded. Also included in the sampling were a small number of women recertified by workers on-site in homeless shelters. Interviews were conducted with a probability sample of 734 TAFDC recipients in Massachusetts aged 20 and over between January and June of 1996. The technical and logistical details of the sampling and interviewing procedures are in Appendix A.

The general process involved screening all women visiting a DTA office to identify those women there for recertification and who met the following criteria:

- < At office for an initial redetermination interview.
- < Aged 20 or older.
- < Receiving TAFDC for at least one of her own children.²
- < Capable of being interviewed in either English or Spanish.

Most women were screened upon entering the office and most were interviewed following their recertification interview. Of the eligible population, only a small fraction -- 5.4 percent -- refused to be interviewed. However, substantially more women -- 17.6 percent of the eligibles -- told us that they did not have time during that visit; many of these women offered to be interviewed at another time. In addition to the refusals and the women with no time, there was another sizeable group of 14.9 percent who consented to the interview, but could not be accommodated by the interviewers at the right time or were lost in the maze of the offices, many

² Women caring for grandchildren, foster children, etc. who did not also have a child of their own in the household were deemed ineligible. Pregnant women with no other children of their own living with them were also excluded from eligibility.

of which were on several floors, and the difficulties of arranging communication processes between busy office staff and interviewing staff. In all, 58 percent of the eligible sample were actually interviewed. Despite the loss of some eligible women, the process was remarkably successful in obtaining an interview sample with demographic characteristics that very closely mirror those of the AFDC caseload in Massachusetts as reported by DTA.³ Because the number of refusals was small and the non-interviews were largely among women who expressed a willingness to be interviewed, there is little reason to believe that the women who were actually interviewed differed from those who were not interviewed.

The interview was introduced as a study about the lives of women on AFDC with reference to the effects of the changes in the welfare laws and what in their lives might be barriers to work. No mention was made of abuse, domestic violence, or relationships with men in the introduction to the study. All participants were paid \$10 in cash upon completion of the interview. Fifteen percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Most of the interview was conducted in the usual interviewer-administered format with questions asked and responses recorded by the interviewer. A copy of the complete survey interview is in Appendix B of this report. For the abuse questions, respondents listened through headphones to an audio tape of the questions and filled out an answer sheet that had only question numbers and response categories, but did not display the questions. Extensive pretesting indicated that this format was the least threatening and most likely to promote accurate reporting for this sensitive series of questions. In the few cases in which respondents expressed a preference to have this section administered by the interviewer, their wishes were honored.

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the respondents in the sample. The mean age of the sample is 30.7 years. Approximately one-fourth (23.6 percent) are aged 20 to 24, one fourth (26.6 percent) aged 25 to 29, one third (35.3 percent) in their thirties, and the remainder (14.5 percent) aged 40 or over. Of the group, 44.8 percent are white, 19.6 percent black, 31.9 percent Hispanic, and 3.7 percent other race/ethnicity. Over a third of the women (36.4 percent) have not completed high school, 40.1 percent have a high school diploma or a GED, and 23.5 percent have some post high school education.

³ A comparison is provided in Table A-4 in Appendix A.

TABLE 3
Characteristics of Sample
(N = 734)

Mean age:		30.7 years
Age:	20-24	23.6%
	25-29	26.6%
	30-39	35.3%
	40 +	14.5%
Race:	White, not Hispanic	44.8%
	Black, not Hispanic	19.6%
	Hispanic	31.9%
	Other	3.7%
Education:	Less than High School	36.4%
	H.S. Graduate/GED	40.1%
	Post H.S. Education	23.5%
Marital Status:	Ever Married	41.7%
	Married	11.9%
	Separated	13.2%
	Divorced	15.4%
	Widowed	1.2%
	Never Married	58.3%
Mean number of children:		2.5
Number of children under 18, at home:	One	36.0%
	Two	32.7%
	Three	19.6%
	Four or more	11.7%
Age of youngest child:	2 or under	36.1%
	3-6 years old	37.4%
	7-11 years old	17.2%
	12-18 years old	9.3%
Mean age at birth of first child:		20.6 years
Age at birth of first child:	17 or younger	20.3%
	18-19	24.9%
	20 or older	54.8%
Ever had paying job:		88.3%
Ever worked full-time:		70.3%
Living situation and average monthly housing cost:	Shelter	2.5% ---
	Public housing	30.7% (\$251)
	Subsidized housing	25.1% (\$319)

Nearly three fourths of the women have at least one child aged six or under (73.5 percent); over one third (36.1 percent) have a child aged two or under. Only 9.3 percent of the group have a youngest child aged 12 or older. The mean number of children for the group is 2.5. Most of the women have one or two children living at home (36.0 percent have one child; 32.7 percent have two children; 19.6 percent have 3 children; and 11.7 percent have four or more). Their average age at the birth of their first child was 20.6 years old. Of the group, 20.3 percent had a first child at age 17 or younger, 24.9 percent at age 18 or 19, and the remaining 54.8 percent were 20 or older when their first child was born.

Most of the women (58.3 percent) have never been married, 15.4 percent are legally divorced, 13.2 percent separated, 11.9 percent are presently married, and 1.2 percent widowed. Approximately one third of the married women report that they are presently living with their spouse while 39.8 percent of the total sample say they are currently involved with a boyfriend, steady partner, or husband.

While there may be a common perception that welfare recipients have never worked, the data collected in this survey indicate otherwise. Almost nine out of every ten recipients (88.3 percent) have previously held a job and the vast majority (70.3 percent) have held a full-time job.

At the time of the interview, the majority of the women were living in public or subsidized housing situations. Nearly a third (30.7 percent) were living in a public housing project or development, one-fourth (25.1 percent) were receiving a government housing subsidy, such as a Section 8 voucher, and 2.5 percent were living in shelters. The 41.8 percent of the sample who are in private housing report average monthly costs of \$504 for rent and utilities, those with housing subsidies report that they pay a monthly average of \$319, and those in public housing report average rent and utility costs of \$251 per month. Nearly one third of those in private housing (31.4 percent) say that they are on a waiting list for some kind of government help with their housing costs.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Respondents were asked about domestic violence in their lives with a series of questions about nine things that may have been done to them by a current or former husband or boyfriend. The questions focus solely on abusive behaviors of male partners and the answers given do not reflect other violence or abuse in their lives. The nine questions are about very specific behaviors and deliberately are not phrased in terms of "abuse" or "domestic violence." At the end of the

series, respondents were asked, "Is there anything else that a current or former boyfriend or husband has ever done to you that you thought was intimidating or physically or emotionally abusive?" Until that question was asked, "abuse" was not mentioned by the interviewer. Thus, the reporting does not rely on the definition held by each individual respondent about what constitutes abuse or domestic violence; it relies on respondents only for reports of concrete things that have happened to them. This feature of the questionnaire is important, especially if comparing these findings with those of other studies, many of which quite directly ask women if they have been abused, thus depending on each woman's own interpretation of the meaning of the term "abuse."

Has any current or former boyfriend or husband ever ...	Ever Happened	Happened in the past 12 months
1. ... made you think that you might be hurt by him?	45.6%	14.5%
2. ... destroyed or taken your possessions or things of value to you?	40.1%	9.2%
3. ... hit, slapped, or kicked you?	53.2%	11.4%
4. ... thrown or shoved you onto the floor, against the wall, or down stairs?	47.1%	10.7%
5. ... tried to keep you from seeing or talking with your friends or family?	39.7%	9.0%
6. ... hurt you badly enough that you went to a doctor or clinic?	21.1%	3.5%
7. ... used a gun, knife, or other object in a way that made you afraid?	25.7%	4.3%
8. ... forced you to have sex or engage in sexual activity against your will?	28.2%	3.9%
9. ... consistently told you that you were worthless or called you names in order to make you feel bad about yourself as a person?	52.7%	15.3%

Table 4 lists the types of abusive behaviors and shows the percent of respondents who

report each of these kinds of violence done to them ever in their lifetime and the percent who report that it has happened in the past year.

Since there is a reasonable debate over the precise definition of domestic violence, we present three separate indices of domestic violence. Table 5 summarizes the items in each of the three indices of domestic violence and the percentage of the sample indicating they had experienced any of them. Outside of the data presented in Table 5, however, the index used throughout this report is the six-item index because it best reflects the legal definition of domestic violence in Massachusetts, as set forth in the 1978 Massachusetts Chapter 209A Abuse Prevention Act. That definition includes physical harm, involuntary sex, and fear of harm. The six items are: hit, slapped, or kicked; thrown or shoved onto floor, against wall, or down stairs; hurt badly enough to go to doctor or clinic; forced you to have sex or engage in sexual activity against your will; made you think you might be hurt by him; and used a gun, knife, or other object in a way that made you afraid.

One fifth (19.5 percent) of the women interviewed experienced abuse within the past twelve months. Using the six behavior definition, most of the women in the sample, 64.9 percent, have experienced at least one of these during their lives, and thus, according to the law, may be considered to have been a victim of abuse by a current or former boyfriend or husband. Two-thirds of the women whom we are categorizing as abused according to the six-item index said yes to three or more of the items.

The survey included questions about other behaviors that are also considered critical components of abuse. The questions about control of property, isolation, and emotional abuse concern behaviors that are hallmarks of many abusive situations. Not only are they integral to battered women's syndrome, but they could conceivably pose significant obstacles to independence and successful participation in the labor force. The nine items include the six behaviors listed above plus the following three: destroyed or taken possessions; tried to keep you from seeing or talking to friends or family; and told you that you were worthless or called you names in order to make you feel bad about yourself. When all nine behaviors listed in Table 4 are included, the percent of women who reported experiencing at least one of these increases to 70.3 percent. Over one-fourth of the sample experienced any of these nine forms of abuse listed in Table 4 in the past 12 months.

TABLE 5
Abuse Indices

SIX-ITEM INDEX:	Hit, slapped or kicked Thrown or shoved onto floor, against wall, or down stairs Hurt badly enough to go to doctor Used a gun, knife, or other object in a way that made you afraid Forced to have sex or engage in sexual activity against will Made you think you might be hurt
<i>Ever happened:</i>	<i>64.9%</i>
<i>Happened in past year:</i>	<i>19.5%</i>

NOTE: This index corresponds to the legal definition of domestic violence in Massachusetts, as set forth in the 1978 Massachusetts Chapter 209A Abuse Prevention Act.

THREE-ITEM INDEX:	Hit, slapped or kicked Thrown or shoved onto floor, against wall, or down stairs Hurt badly enough to go to doctor
<i>Ever happened:</i>	<i>57.6%</i>
<i>Happened in past year:</i>	<i>13.8%</i>

NINE-ITEM INDEX:	Hit, slapped or kicked Thrown or shoved onto floor, against wall, or down stairs Hurt badly enough to go to doctor Used a gun, knife, or other object in a way that made you afraid Forced to have sex or engage in sexual activity against will Made you think you might be hurt Destroyed or taken possessions or things of value Tried to keep you from seeing or talking to friends or family, Told you that you were worthless or was demeaning
<i>Ever happened:</i>	<i>70.3%</i>
<i>Happened in past year:</i>	<i>26.0%</i>

Even using a very conservative criterion to define strict physical violence, including only the three items that describe evident physical victimization (i.e. hit, slapped, kicked; thrown or shoved; hurt badly enough to go to doctor), well over half of the respondents (57.6 percent) reported that at least one of these things had happened to them at the hands of a current or former husband or boyfriend at some time in their lives. The figure for those who experienced the three strictly physical abuse behaviors in the past year is 13.8 percent. Importantly, including threat items and the sexual force items adds only 7.3 percent more of the respondents beyond those

reporting physical violence, suggesting that threats and forced sex seldom occur in the absence of the other behaviors.

The structure of the questions asking about abuse does not actually provide any information about frequency or intensity of abuse. The behaviors described also may vary in consequences. And, since respondents were not asked to link behaviors to individual abusers, the behaviors reported could have occurred over many years across multiple relationships. With these limitations in mind, we still think that a look at the data according to total number of abusive behaviors reported might be informative. Table 6 shows the percent of ever abused women, according to the six-item index, reporting one, two, three, four, five, or six behaviors having ever happened.

Experienced 1 ITEM on the abuse index:	16.0%
Experienced 2 ITEMS on the abuse index:	18.3%
Experienced 3 ITEMS on the abuse index:	17.9%
Experienced 4 ITEMS on the abuse index:	18.3%
Experienced 5 ITEMS on the abuse index:	17.9%
Experienced 6 ITEMS on the abuse index:	11.8%

Even though every attempt was made to create conditions in which respondents would feel comfortable disclosing abuse, there remains the likelihood of underreporting. In addition to the shame of reporting intimate victimization, the respondents were interviewed in the stressful situation of being in welfare offices for redetermination interviews. The focus group and pretest respondents indicated concerns about confidentiality and fears about consequences to themselves and their children if information about the domestic violence in their lives were to be known by any worker in the welfare system. Many women were unaware that they could continue to receive benefits if they were even dating a man. Many more expressed fears about losing custody of their children if the violence were to be exposed. If anything, the rates reported here are conservative estimates of the actual abuse rates.

Ever Abused Women Compared with Never Abused Women

The survey contained questions on a wide range of topics. The information provided is valuable in itself since no representative survey of Massachusetts TAFDC recipients has ever been done. Concerning domestic violence, the survey asks a series of questions that are useful in thinking about the possible intersection of poverty, welfare policies, and domestic violence. In this section we discuss responses to questions in the survey dealing with the following six topics: conflicts with men; exposure to violence in childhood; demographic characteristics and living conditions; health and disability; education, employment and training; and well being and personal resources. For each topic we discuss the differences and similarities between the women in the sample who indicated they were ever abused (using the six-item index) and those reporting that they were never abused.

Conflicts with men

Many of the women in the sample are embroiled in disagreements with men concerning child support, visitation, or custody. Table 7 shows that one fourth of the sample (25.1 percent) report problems or arguments with a man about child support within the twelve months prior to the interview. Problems or arguments about visitation were reported by 18.7 percent of the women, and problems or arguments about custody were reported by 11.2 percent.

Many women in the sample have sought remedies for and protection from violence through the legal system. Well over a third (38.4 percent) have taken out a restraining order against a current or former boyfriend or husband. Nearly a third of those, which is 11.8 percent of the total sample, have had a restraining order in effect in the past year. The figures for calling the police because of being hurt or threatened by a current or former boyfriend or husband are similar: 38.5 percent have ever called and 11.9 percent have called in the past year. Conflict and disturbance are not uncommon among the sample; one fourth (25.9 percent) report that the police have come to their house in the past year for some kind of disturbance, including violence or threats by a husband or boyfriend.

Not surprisingly, the abused group differs from the non-abused group on their responses to all of the questions concerning conflict in their lives, underscoring the high probability of disagreement resulting in domestic violence in this group. The abused group is much more likely than the non-abused group to have had problems or arguments with a man in the past year over child support (29.2 percent vs. 17.5 percent), over visitation (23.7 percent vs. 9.3 percent), and

over custody (14.7 percent vs 4.7 percent). More than half of the abused group (56.2 percent) compared with only 5.8 percent of the non-abused group report having ever called the police because a partner threatened or hurt her, with 18.0 percent of the abused and 0.8 percent of the non-abused reporting that they did so in the past year. The numbers for getting a restraining order are similar: 54.6 percent of the abused group and 8.6 percent of the non-abused group have taken out a restraining order at some time. Nearly a fifth of the abused group (18.0 percent) had a restraining order in effect during the past twelve months, while only one woman from the non-abused group had a restraining order in effect. These data provide validation for the abuse categorizations. They also demonstrate the close relationship between abuse and conflict over issues having to do with child support, visitation, and custody. Table 7 summarizes the responses discussed in this section.

TABLE 7
Conflicts With Men
Total Sample and by Abuse Status

	TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 734)	EVER ABUSED ¹ (N = 476)	NEVER ABUSED ¹ (N = 258)
Has argued with a man over child support in the past year ***	25.1%	29.2%	17.5%
Has argued with a man over visitation issues in the past year ***	18.7%	23.7%	9.3%
Has argued with a man over child custody in the past year ***	11.2%	14.7%	4.7%
Has ever had a restraining order against a partner ***	38.4%	54.6%	8.6%
Has had a restraining order against a partner in effect in the past year ***	11.8%	18.0%	0.4%
Has ever called the police because a partner threatened or hurt her ***	38.5%	56.2%	5.8%
Has called the police in the past year because a partner threatened or hurt her ***	11.9%	18.0%	0.8%
Has had police come to house in the past year ***	25.9%	32.6%	13.6%

¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index.
Significant differences between ever abused and never abused: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001

Exposure to violence in childhood

A large percentage of women indicated that as children they had been exposed to violence, either as a witness or as a victim. Respondents were asked both about their own childhood experiences and about their exposure to violence among adults in their household while they were growing up. During the interview, respondents were shown the three lists (one at a time) displayed in Table 8. For each, they were asked if an adult in their household ever did any of the things on the list to them. They were then asked if the adults in the household ever did these things to each other. List 1 is obviously the list of most concern. Lists 2 and 3 do, however, provide indicators of the climate in the household -- levels of acrimony and levels of physical punishment. These questions ask only about behaviors of adults in the respondent's household and provide no indication of exposure to violence or trauma involving adults outside of the household, or other youths.

With respect to the violent behaviors included in List 1, 29.0 percent of the women report that an adult in their household kicked, bit or hit them with a fist, hit or tried to hit them with something, beat up, choked, burned or scalded them. While both groups had considerable exposure to violence in childhood, the abused women are more than twice as likely to have been exposed to violence -- both as victims and as witnesses. Over a third (35.3 percent) of abused women also experienced at least one of the items on List 1 at the hands of an adult in her household while she was growing up, in contrast with 17.4 percent of the non-abused group. One third (33.5 percent) of those abused, compared with 15.1 percent of those not abused, lived in households where these behaviors occurred between adults.

List 2 items (push, grab, or shove; slap or spank; and throw something) are reported by 67.2 percent of the sample. This grouping includes slapping and spanking, which are common physical punishments for children, so it is not surprising that the figures for similar types of reported behaviors between adults is somewhat less. Yet, nearly four-tenths of women (39.8 percent) in the sample report being exposed to these in their childhood households. Well over half of the women (58.4 percent) grew up in households in which adults directed at least one of the following behaviors at them: insult or swear, sulk or refuse to talk, stomp out of the room, do or say something to spite, threaten to hit, or smash or kick something in anger. The reported incidence of the behaviors on Lists 2 and 3 are significantly higher for the abused than the non-abused women, indicating a strong general pervasiveness of dissention and violence in the childhood homes of women who later become adult victims of domestic violence.

These data point to the link between childhood victimization and adult victimization,

dramatically highlighting the potential consequences of exposure to violence and conflict in childhood. They direct our attention to the risks for the children of these women, even if the children themselves are not the target of the domestic violence.

TABLE 8
Violence in Home During Childhood, by Three Lists of Behaviors
Total Sample and by Abuse Status

	TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 734)	EVER ABUSED ¹ (N = 476)	NEVER ABUSED ¹ (N = 258)
LIST 1 <i>Kick, bite, or hit with a fist; hit or try to hit with something; beat up; choke; burn or scald</i>			
An adult in your household ever did any of the things on List 1 <u>to you</u> ? ***	29.0%	35.3%	17.4%
The adults in your household ever did any of the things on List 1 <u>to each other</u> ? ***	27.0%	33.5%	15.1%
LIST 2 <i>Push, grab or shove; slap or spank; throw something</i>			
An adult in your household ever did any of the things on List 2 <u>to you</u> ?***	67.2%	74.4%	53.9%
The adults in your household ever did any of the things on List 2 <u>to each other</u> ?***	39.8%	46.1%	28.3%
LIST 3 <i>Insult or swear; sulk or refuse to talk; stomp out of the room; do or say something to spite; threaten to hit; smash or kick something in anger</i>			
An adult in your household ever did any of the things on List 3 <u>to you</u> ?***	58.4%	65.9%	44.6%
The adults in your household ever did any of the things on List 3 <u>to each other</u> ?***	54.3%	62.0%	40.1%
¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. Significant differences between ever abused and never abused: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001			

Demographics and living situation

There were no statistically significant differences between women reporting abuse compared to those who did not report abuse in current marital status, average age, number of children, present living circumstances, or percent having a youngest child under six years old. Women who were abused were, however, slightly younger when their first child was born than those not reporting abuse (mean age 20.4 vs. 21.1). Further, ever abused women are much more likely to have been married (47.1 percent) than non-abused women (31.8 percent), even though abuse does not relate to current likelihood of having a partner. White (not of Hispanic origin) respondents were significantly more likely to report abuse than non-white women: 52.1 percent of ever abused women were white compared with 31.4 percent of never abused women. Three quarters (75.2 percent) of all white women report having ever been abused as compared with 56.0 percent of all non-white women (black 57.3 percent; Hispanic 54.3 percent; other race/ethnicity 63.0 percent).

Table 9 contains a summary of these demographic characteristics only where the differences between the abused population were significantly different than the non-abused.

TABLE 9 Selected Demographic Characteristics of Sample by Abuse Status		
	EVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 476)	NEVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 258)
Race***		
White, not Hispanic	52.1%	31.4%
Black, not Hispanic	17.4%	23.6%
Hispanic	26.8%	41.1%
Other	3.6%	3.9%
Mean age at birth of first child*	20.4 years	21.1 years
Ever married***	47.1%	31.8%
¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. Significant differences between ever abused and never abused: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001		

Health and disabilities

A substantial number of respondents (28.1 percent) report that they currently have a ?physical disability, handicap, or other serious physical, mental or emotional problem? and over one-fourth of the sample feel that their condition limits the amount or kind of work they can do. However, only 12.4 percent report that they would be unable to work for pay due to their condition. Of those reporting disabilities or problems, the most often mentioned were: psychological, including depression and anxiety disorders (43.5 percent), muscular-skeletal difficulties, including arthritis, back problems, congenital disorders, and injuries (24.6 percent), asthma and other respiratory problems and allergies (15.0 percent), and heart-blood-circulatory problems (9.2 percent). Many other women in the sample are in poor health, reporting illnesses such as cancer and lupus. There are 30 SSI recipients in the sample (4.1 percent).

Women who have been abused are significantly more likely than non-abused women to respond affirmatively when asked if they currently have a physical disability, handicap, or any other serious physical, mental or emotional problem: 31.7 percent of abused women say yes as compared with 21.4 percent of non-abused women.

As reported in Table 10, abused women are significantly more likely to report that they have a child with an ongoing disability that limits his or her activities (33.7 percent vs. 19.8 percent) and over twice as many abused as non-abused women (14.8 percent vs. 6.3 percent) say that they have a child whose disabilities keep him or her from attending regular day care or regular school.

TABLE 10
Disabilities of Respondents and their Children
Total Sample and by Abuse Status

	TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 734)	EVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 476)	NEVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 258)
Currently has a physical disability, handicap, or other serious physical, mental, or emotional problem**	28.1%	31.7%	21.4%
Has a condition that makes her unable to work	12.4%	13.5%	11.1%
Has a child with an ongoing disability that limits his/her activities ***	28.8%	33.7%	19.8%
Has a child whose disabilities keeps her/him out of regular school***	11.7%	14.8%	6.3%

¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. Significant differences between ever abused and never abused: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001

Education, employment, and training

A large number of the respondents have had limited education. However, nearly a fourth of the sample (23.6 percent) are presently enrolled in either school or a job training program. Of those, 11.8 percent are working toward an Associates Degree and 13.6 percent toward a B.A. or B.S. degree. English as a Second Language (8.9 percent), GED (14.8 percent), health technician and assistant programs (20.1 percent), and office and secretarial training (13 percent) account for the bulk of the schooling outside of traditional college programs. The respondents were eager to tell the interviewers about their skills and training for work: 43.1 percent of them reported that their school and training have given them some skills or trained them for particular work or a job. Nearly half of those who report any training received it either in the health care field (27.8 percent) or in secretarial typing/word processing (24.4 percent).

Most of the respondents have worked for pay at some time in their lives: 70.3 percent of the sample report ever holding a full-time job. Sixty (8.2 percent) women report having worked for pay in the week prior to the interview, predominantly in part-time situations. Over half worked twenty hours or less with only a fifth reporting work of thirty hours or more.

Respondents were queried about preferences for working, going to school, or staying home: ?Right now, if you had a choice, would you prefer to stay home full-time with your (child/children) or would you rather go to work or school, at least part-time.? The overwhelming majority, 89.4 percent, stated a preference for work or school over staying home full-time. Of those choosing the work/school option, 47.2 percent preferred some combination of work and school, 21.9 percent preferred full-time work, 11.3 percent preferred part-time work, 10.1 percent preferred full-time school, and 9.5 percent preferred part-time school.

Contrary to common stereotypes, educational attainment does not appear to be a good predictor of involvement with domestic violence. There are no educational differences between the abused and non-abused groups and no differences in current school or training status. Abused women are just as likely as non-abused women to express a preference for work or school when asked if they would prefer to stay home full-time or would they rather go to work or school, at least part-time. And, there are no differences in the structure of their preferences; they select work and school and part-time or full-time in the same proportions as non-abused women.

While the vast majority of the women in both the ever and never abused groups have held paying jobs, abused women are slightly, but significantly, more likely to have held any paying job;

90.9 percent of abused women and 83.3 percent of non-abused women have worked for pay at some time in their lives. Abused women are also more likely to have held a full-time job than non-abused women (73.5 percent versus 64.5 percent). There is, however, no difference between the groups in whether they are currently working.

Those who indicated they were abused do not differ from those in the non-abused group in their perceptions of how difficult it would be, assuming acceptable childcare arrangements, to get a job or to get a job that they liked. Childcare and transportation are obstacles for many of the women in the sample, but the difficulties do not differ by abuse status. However, one critical difference between the groups is that abused women are much more likely to report having a present or former partner who presently would not like it if they had a job, went to school, or enrolled in a job training program (15.5 percent vs. 1.6 percent). Table 11 summarizes the responses on questions about employment and training.

Table 11 Employment History and Training Total Sample and by Abuse Status			
	TOTAL SAMPLE (N = 734)	EVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 476)	NEVER ABUSED ¹ (N= 258)
Ever have a paying job **	88.3%	90.9%	83.3%
Currently working	8.2%	8.8%	7.0%
Ever have a full-time job *	70.3%	73.5%	64.5%
Prefer to go to school or work (rather than stay home full-time with children)	89.4%	89.5%	89.1%
Has a current or former partner who wouldn't like her going to school/work ***	10.6%	15.5%	1.6%
Currently enrolled in a school or job training program	23.6%	25.2%	20.5%
Had schooling/training for particular work	43.1%	45.4%	38.8%
¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. Significant differences between ever abused and never abused: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001			

Well being and personal resources

Included in the interviews of all English speaking respondents⁴ were three indicators of well being that are widely believed to be associated with the effects of domestic violence, as well as other traumas and negative life experiences: 1) self-esteem, measured with the ten item Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg 1965); 2) sense of mastery, measured with the seven item Mastery Scale developed by Pearlin (Pearlin 1981); and 3) symptoms of depression and anxiety as measured with the 6 item non-specific distress index (National Health Interview Survey Redesigned 1996. See Fowler 1996) developed at the University of Michigan. Each of these three scales may also be seen as measuring important resources or impediments for a successful transition into paid employment. Each has been widely used in general population studies and all three are well validated. A look at the items in each of them on pages B-12 and B-14 in the questionnaire in Appendix B will provide a good sense of the qualities they are measuring.

Mean scores for the group on these scales are shown in Table 12. Compared to samples from the general population, the respondents in this sample do not appear to be faring well. As a group, they average lower in self-esteem and sense of mastery and report a higher average quantity of symptoms. Of interest in this study is not the absolute levels of these, but how they relate to the other variables of concern, such as experience with domestic violence. And, indeed, there are large significant differences between those who were ever abused and those who were never abused in all three measures of psychological resources and well-being: levels of self-esteem, mastery, and psychological symptoms. These results provide dramatic evidence that abused women bear emotional and psychological effects of violence. Their self-esteem is considerably lower, they experience more symptoms of psychological distress, and have less sense of control and mastery over what happens in their lives.

TABLE 12 Measures of Self-Esteem, Mastery, and Symptoms of Depression Total Sample and by Abuse Status (English Speaking Sample Only)			
	TOTAL	EVER	NEVER

⁴ Women interviewed in Spanish were not administered the Self Esteem, Mastery, and Distress Scales for two reasons: 1) Accurate translation is difficult to achieve and 2) the Spanish interviews took significantly longer to administer, so it was necessary to omit some sections to hold the average interview length to approximately 30 minutes.

	SAMPLE (N = 624)	ABUSED ¹ (N= 419)	ABUSED ¹ (N= 205)
Self-Esteem (mean score) ² ***	77.93	76.38	81.07
Mastery (mean score) ² ***	68.34	66.29	72.51
Symptoms (mean score) ² ***	35.76	39.86	27.39
¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. ² Scales were adjusted to a 100-point scale for ease of use and comparisons. Significant differences between ever abused and never abused. *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001			

Summary of comparisons of abused and never abused women

Abused and non-abused women who receive TAFDC share many similar characteristics. They do not differ by housing circumstance, average age, number of children, educational levels, or desire to work or go to school. However in some key areas, the two populations do differ. Abused women are much more likely than non-abused women to be engaged in current conflicts with men, more likely to face opposition from a former or current boyfriend or husband to their participation in a work training program or in paid employment, more likely to have experienced violence in their households as children, more likely to have ever been married, and more likely to score lower on measures of self-esteem, mastery and emotional well-being. In addition, in response to an open ended question in the interview that asked "What was going on in your life that first led you to go onto AFDC?", abused women are much more likely to mention the end of a relationship (33.0 percent vs 20.5 percent) than non-abused women and, of course, were also much more likely to mention violence as a precipitant (7.6 percent vs. 0.4 percent) to first getting AFDC. Finally, significantly fewer abused women have been on AFDC continuously than have non-abused women (60.8 percent vs 68.6 percent). This means that abused women are more likely to have stopped receiving AFDC for some period of time, but then started again. We also know that abused women are slightly more likely to have ever worked and to have worked full-time. One possibility to explain these data is that women who have been victims have made forays into the workplace that have been thwarted, possibly due to the violence in their lives. Another reason for cycling off and onto welfare is that they have returned to men and then been forced to leave when confronted with violence. Although these data cannot fully address the reasons for these differences, together the findings do provide some indication of an important intersection between AFDC, workforce participation, and domestic violence.

Women Abused Within the Past Year Compared with Abused Prior to the Past Year

This section compares women who have been abused within the twelve months before the interview with those whose abuse took place sometime prior to the twelve months preceding the interview. These comparisons between recently abused women and those abused in the more distant past can shed light on the longer and shorter term effects of domestic violence by identifying which effects diminish over time and which effects do not. The survey revealed very few differences between recently abused women and women abused prior to the past year. However, distinctions between the groups did emerge in two major areas: 1) experiences with violence and conflict, and 2) mental health, well being, and personal resources -- specifically, psychological distress, self-esteem, and sense of mastery.

The recently abused group, in comparison with the previously abused group, is more likely to have argued with a man in the past year over child custody, visitation, or support, suggesting that violence is implicated in these disagreements. Well over a third of women who have been abused in the past year report that they had visitation or child support problems or arguments. The data on custody disputes in the past year are particularly interesting. One way to look at the data is from the perspective of comparisons between the groups; women who have been abused in the past year are much more likely to have had custody disagreements. Another way to view these findings is that 42 percent of the women who had any custody disagreement in the past year also experienced abuse during the year, which suggests at the least, that custody conflicts among this group signal situations in which the woman is highly likely to be abused. Recently abused women are more likely to report that they ever called the police due to threats or injuries inflicted by a partner (69.9 percent versus 50.3 percent) and much more likely to have done so in the past twelve months. The data for restraining orders are similar, with 46.2 percent of recently abused having a restraining order in effect in the past twelve months, compared with 5.8 percent of the previously abused. The figures for ever having gotten a restraining order are 69.2 percent for the recently abused and 48.3 percent for the previously abused.

With respect to well being, there is a consistent pattern across the three measures we used - self-esteem, sense of mastery, and psychological distress. Women who have been recently abused appear to be much worse off than women whose abuse occurred prior to the past year, and the previously abused women are much worse off than those who were never abused. These data demonstrate the powerful negative effects of violence on the sample and also suggest that the

effects do diminish over time. We cannot, however, conclude from these data that 12 months is a sufficient recovery period. The prior abuse group remains significantly less well off than the never abused group. We lack the information on the timing of the abuse that would allow us to make inferences about rate of recovery. Our only information on the timing of most recent abuse is whether it occurred within or prior to the last 12 months, so we do not know when the abuse occurred for those women who did not experience abuse in the past 12 months; it could have been as recent as twelve months and one day before the interview or it could have been decades before. Twelve months looks like a start, but clearly not an adequate or complete recovery period. The differences we note between the groups may be due to effects on the average well being of the prior abuse group by the scores of the women who experienced their last abuse many years prior to the interview.

The comparisons shown in Table 13 are between women reporting abuse prior to the past twelve months but not during the past twelve months and women reporting abuse occurring within the past twelve months. Only the characteristics for which significant differences were obtained between the groups are included in the table.

TABLE 13
Selected Responses of Those Abused
by Abuse Status in Past 12 Months

	ABUSED ¹ IN PAST 12 MONTHS (N = 143)	ABUSED ¹ PRIOR TO PAST 12 MONTHS (N = 333)
Mean age **	29.2 years	31.2 years
Mean age at birth of first child *	19.8 years	20.7 years
Has a current or former partner who wouldn't like her going to school/work *	21.7%	12.9%
Education*		
Less than High School	33.1%	34.5%
High School Graduate/GED	48.6%	37.3%
More than High School	18.3%	28.2%
Has argued with a man over child custody in the past year ***	24.5%	10.5%
Has argued with a man over visitation issues in the past year ***	36.4%	18.3%
Has argued with a man over child support in the past year ***	38.3%	25.3%
Has ever had a restraining order against a partner ***	69.2%	48.3%
Has had a restraining order against a partner in effect in the past year ***	46.2%	5.8%
Has ever called the police because a partner threatened or hurt her ***	69.9%	50.3%
Has called the police in the past year because a partner threatened or hurt her ***	50.7%	3.9%
Self-Esteem (mean score) ² **	72.70	78.03
Mastery (mean score) ² ***	61.41	68.47
Symptoms (mean score) ² ***	46.00	37.13
¹ A respondent is defined as "abused" if she responded yes to any of the abuse questions in the six-item index. ² Scales were adjusted to a 100-point scale for ease of use and comparisons. Asked of only English speaking respondents: 129 abused in past 12 months and 290 abused prior to past 12 months Significant differences between abused in past 12 months and abused prior to past 12 months: *p # .05 **p # .01 ***p # .001		

4. Implications and Consequences of Domestic Violence on Poverty and Welfare Reform Efforts

The Social and Psychological Consequences of Domestic Violence

This survey revealed negative emotional and psychological effects of domestic violence consistent with those in the literature that describe various social and psychological effects that domestic violence has on its victims and their children. A number of studies have focused on low self-esteem, a characteristic often found in women in abusive relationships (Walker 1979; Mitchell and Hodson 1983). Recent studies have examined the difference between battered and non-battered women's self-esteem over time. Aguilar and Nightingale (1994) found that self-esteem scores improved over time, i.e., those women abused over one year ago appeared to have higher self-esteem. Factors other than time, however, may also contribute to this increase in self-esteem. As a group, women who experienced more controlling/emotional abuse had lower self-esteem scores. Our study confirms those findings among TAFDC recipients. Campbell, Sullivan and Davidson (1995) studied long term depression among 141 women who used a domestic violence shelter in the Midwest and found that depressive symptoms decreased the more time had elapsed since they exited the shelter. They also found that women who perceived little control over their lives were most depressed. Feelings of powerlessness, abuse and lack of social supports predicted depression six months after leaving the shelter. This same study found strong relationships between social supports and psychological well-being (Tan, Basta, Sullivan, and Davidson 1995). Gelles and Straus (1990) have noted that severely assaulted women had much higher rates of psychological distress than other women, including four times the rate of feeling depressed and five and a half times more suicide attempts.

The effects of the trauma experienced by domestic violence victims have also been associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disorder originally described in war veterans. The criteria for PTSD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, 309.89) include reexperiencing the traumatic event through recurrent images, thoughts, and dreams, and generally experiencing intense psychological distress. Battered women have often been found to have many of these symptoms (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson and Zak 1986; Mitchell and Hodson 1983) and to meet the criteria for a formal diagnosis of PTSD (Kemp, Rawlings, and Green 1991).

Kemp, Green, Hovanitz and Rawlings (1995) surveyed 179 battered women and 48 non-

battered but verbally abused women drawn from shelters, therapy and support groups. They found that 81 percent of the physically abused group met the PTSD criteria and that 63 percent of the verbally abused also met the criteria. They conclude that the diagnosis of PTSD is important to consider not only for women who have experienced physical abuse, but also for those whose abuse was verbal only. In a study of 192 battered women in five states receiving assistance from domestic violence and other kinds of programs, of the 159 women who obtained help from domestic violence programs and 33 from other types of programs, Saunders (1994) found that over 60 percent of the women met the criteria for PTSD.

Symptoms of PTSD have been documented by Raphael (1995) in her studies of domestic violence among AFDC recipients. She notes that it is difficult for women on welfare to get rid of the terror of the abuser, fearing that he will show up unexpectedly at their work training program. The symptoms of PTSD that Raphael has observed include poor concentration, markedly diminished interest in significant activities and a sense of foreshortened future. Judith Herman, a psychiatrist specializing in psychological trauma and trauma recovery, notes the trauma of violence can seriously affect the ability of the victim to concentrate and to work (1992).

The authors of the Better Homes Foundation study in Worcester of homeless and low-income housed women described earlier in this report found that the lifetime prevalence of major depressive disorder, PTSD and alcohol or other drug abuse among both homeless and housed, low-income women, most of whom had been victims of violence, was higher than among women in the general population. The lifetime prevalence of PTSD was three times higher than in the general population. Nearly one-third of homeless and one quarter of housed mothers reported that they had made at least one suicide attempt during their lifetime (Bassuk, Browne and Buckner 1996).

A recent Massachusetts report on children and domestic violence, states that "children exposed to the battering of their mothers suffer the same harm and display the same symptoms as children who are actually abused, including the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder." (Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence 1996, p. 14 citing Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson 1990 and Peled, Jaffe, and Edelson 1995). The Commission's report stresses that despite mothers' efforts to shield their children from violence, most studies indicate that 68-87 percent of partner abuse is witnessed by children (Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence 1996, citing Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson 1990).

In a more recent study of 47 children living in a Florida battered women's shelter, the

author found that children witnessing family violence had significantly greater developmental delays and behavioral problems than a comparison group of children experiencing normative family experiences (Gleason 1995). It is not uncommon for children from abusive homes to have behavioral problems and to be in need of counseling (Herman 1992).

Even though the impact of domestic violence on the lives of women and their children is severe, recovery can and does occur. Judith Herman identifies three stages of recovery: (1) safety, (2) remembering and mourning, and (3) reconnection to ordinary life. As she stresses, these stages cannot occur in isolation but only within relationships that support the woman and provide her with new connections. The length of time it takes to recover is difficult to determine, since it does not follow a simple progression. At the same time, Herman (1992) underscores that: "Though resolution [of the trauma/abuse] is never complete, it is often sufficient for the survivor to turn her attention from the tasks of recovery to the tasks of ordinary life [with supportive relationships and community connections]" (p. 212).

The Impact of Domestic Violence on TAFDC Recipients

The prevalence of domestic violence and the way it intersects with poverty suggests that the new welfare reform efforts are of concern. Some of the changes may not have their desired effects and in some cases they may actually place families directly in harm's way.

The data confirm that an enormously high proportion of women receiving TAFDC are also contending with domestic abuse and/or its aftermath. In fact, more women in the sample have at one time been victims than not. The data further suggest that there is no reason to believe that these women and their children do not remain at physical and psychological risk from their past abuse and abuser(s) or from men in present or future relationships. Given the high prevalence of domestic violence among TAFDC recipients and the special issues, concerns, and obstacles that experience with violence, both current and past, poses for women and their children, it is very likely that the planned welfare reforms will have crucial, and not necessarily positive or intended, effects on many women victims and their children.

The following section discusses four areas of concern that may be particularly problematic for significant numbers of women who have experienced domestic violence. In some cases, they may heighten physical risks for the women and their children, in others they may create unattainable goals, or exacerbate difficult situations and pose insurmountable barriers. In light of the data from this study, and all that is already known about domestic violence, all four call for

careful scrutiny and consideration of their potential impact on this very large segment of the TAFDC population and on the ways in which women who are contending with, or who have contended with, domestic violence will be best able to make steps toward self-sufficiency. The four areas are: 1) Erosion of the safety net for women who need public assistance because of domestic violence; 2) Emphasis on replacing TAFDC with earnings as quickly as possible; 3) Time limits; and 4) Paternity provisions.

Erosion of the safety net for women who need public assistance due to domestic violence

Domestic violence, due to its association with unemployment and economic stress, can often lead to poverty (Gelles and Straus 1990). The ability of a woman with children to leave an abusive situation is predicated on her having enough resources to support her family away from her batterer. Kalmuss and Straus (1990) suggest that wives who are highly dependent emotionally or financially on their husbands tolerate abuse if they perceive they have no other available options. Welfare has served as a vehicle out of violent situations for many women. Policies that increase stigmatization and obstacles to receipt of assistance may very well discourage women from leaving abusive situations and may make a difficult and risky time even more difficult and risky for those abused women who do apply for public assistance.

New TAFDC requirements, such as compulsory reporting of children's school attendance and provision of immunization documentation, that appear relatively simple to comply with, may present seemingly insurmountable barriers for women fleeing current abuse. The physical and psychological impact of domestic violence, including depression and feeling out of control, as well as the disarray in the lives of women fleeing battering situations, may preclude women from providing all the proper paperwork in a timely fashion. If women are treated as if their non-compliance is voluntary and are sanctioned for it, they will lose much needed income. If it becomes too difficult to comply, they may return to unsafe domestic situations. In addition, safety requirements are often at odds with other requirements. For example, many battered women's shelters actually require employed women to leave their jobs so that they cannot be tracked down and harassed by their batterers.

Emphasis on replacing TAFDC with earnings as quickly as possible

Under the new regulations, recipients must either find paid work within two months of getting TAFDC or do 20 hours per week of community service. Only those caring for a disabled

child or whose youngest child is not school age are exempt. Recipients are sanctioned for non-compliance. Recipients who have ever been victims of domestic violence often have physical disabilities and low self-esteem, and are emotionally strained. These emotional and physical consequences of domestic violence may preclude compliance for some subset of women.

A recent survey of welfare-to-work service providers in New York City indicated that up to 70 percent of clients were victims of domestic violence (Davis 1996). The job training providers surveyed documented the variety of means used by abusers to control or sabotage a woman's involvement in educational and job training programs and in their jobs. These include physical and emotional abuse, harassment, and stalking. They documented the deleterious effects that batterers have on victims who are transitioning from welfare to work.

Batterers are often reluctant to allow their victims to gain economic independence. Any steps toward entry into the workforce threaten the abuser's control. As one Denver, Colorado welfare-to-work provider notes, "domestic violence is the biggest issue for successful transition into the workplace" (Boyd, p. 4 as quoted in Raphael 1995). Efforts to place women who receive public assistance into immediate job or workfare placements may not only fail, but may potentially place recipients into harmful situations. Further, many women, especially those involved in disputes over custody, may be reluctant to leave their children, even with a babysitter or in a daycare setting, where they themselves cannot protect the children from being taken by the abuser, which is a common threat made by abusers to maintain control over their victims. Women may decide that staying home is the safest option they have for themselves and their children.

Time limits

The Massachusetts' time limit for public assistance is now 24 months out of any five year period. The federal legislation requires that an adult recipient can receive TANF funds for 60 month over her entire lifetime. There are many easily imagined scenarios under which time limits might be inappropriate for victims of domestic violence. Once women leave a battering situation, it is not uncommon for batterers to stalk for a long period after the separation, making it impossible for victims to take jobs or to keep jobs without risk. Batterers often create disturbances in workplaces, harass women at work, or prevent women from getting to work reliably and on time. Many victims are forced to move repeatedly and to leave jobs as a result of their abuser's continued endangerment.

The depression and emotional stress experienced by abused women present another set of

impediments. Recovery is most certainly possible, but the findings of this and other studies suggest that 24 months out of a five year period may in many cases not be enough time for many abused women. In those cases for which it is not enough time, the time limit could place women and their children in jeopardy. Wendy Pollack, senior attorney with the Poverty Law Project, notes: "Because victims suffer many types and degrees of harm as a result of domestic violence, each woman must be allowed the time and flexibility necessary to find safety, to begin the healing process, and to become economically self sufficient. For some women, this may take only months; for others a few years" (Pollack 1996, p. 339).

Paternity and child exclusion ("family cap") provisions

Recipients have always been required to cooperate in establishing paternity and obtaining child support. Recently the Department of Revenue has focussed on much stricter enforcement of paternity and child support requirements in an effort to better collect support from absent and non-custodial fathers. These rules have been legally challenged and a court injunction has forestalled their full implementation, but the legislation has not been changed. Pursuant to the preliminary injunction, a recipient must provide all the information that she has or can reasonably get in order to identify the father. The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Department of Revenue determines cooperation. When non-custodial parents pay child support that is less than the total TAFDC cash grant, the custodial parent receives a maximum of \$50 per month of those payments.

Any additional amount paid goes to the state to defer the costs of welfare cash assistance. Not cooperating with paternity reporting rules results in loss of the adult portion of benefits and loss of Medicaid eligibility.

These requirements and heightened enforcement have the potential of increasing risk for many women and their children. While recipients are advised of the consequences of not cooperating, they are rarely advised of the consequences of establishing paternity -- mainly the right to seek visitation or custody. Requiring both parents to take financial and physical responsibility for children is something that few would frown on. However, for victims of domestic violence, re-establishing a connection with a father who is also a former batterer, could be very dangerous. The data collected here demonstrate that a large percentage of women who have been victims of domestic violence are in conflicts with men over child support, visitation, and custody.

TANF allows "good cause" exemptions; however, states are left to define those and other

exemptions. Since Massachusetts plans to adhere to the rules under the waiver they received in 1995, the definitions that existed under TAFDC at that time apply. Good cause -- as defined in federal law and regulation -- exists if cooperating puts a recipient or her child at risk. Incest or forcible rape, pending adoption, or if cooperation would result in serious harm or emotional impairment are all grounds for "good cause." The DTA determines "good cause" and any claim must be verified by a birth certificate, a medical or law enforcement document that indicates a child was conceived as the result of incest or forcible rape, or other documents from law, medical, or psychological professionals that indicates the harm a noncustodial parent might inflict. Unfortunately, even when domestic violence victims are aware of a "good cause" exemption, there is reason to believe that many fear disclosing abuse. For some this might be for fear of losing custody of their children or retaliation from the batterer, for others it may be because of reluctance to reveal such personal information to a stranger. Despite the high percentage of women who are victims of domestic violence, a very small percentage of "good cause" waivers are granted. In 1993, of the five million AFDC cases nationwide, only 6,585 custodial parents (less than 0.2%) claimed "good cause" as a reason for not cooperating, and of those only 4,320 were found valid (Pollack 1996, p. 337). Massachusetts has reported no "good cause" claims since 1988.

Women often need help obtaining documentation and need to be well informed about the possibility of using this information to qualify for a good cause exemption. Women forced to provide paternity or child support information may be subjected to countersuits for custody or visitation; however, at present, the Commonwealth provides no legal help to these women. Without a climate of cooperation and trust or explicit recognition of the difficulties and risks for many women, the low level of reporting is unlikely to change.

A similar reporting problem could arise under the state's child exclusion provision. If a woman receiving TAFDC gives birth to a child, that child is not eligible for TAFDC. If the child is born as the result of a rape, sexual assault or incest (all forms of domestic violence), he or she is exempted from this provision, but this must be verified by a birth certificate or medical or law enforcement record. These events are underreported generally and are less likely to be reported when they involve intimates for fear of retaliation (Pollack 1996).

5. Next Steps

In a relatively short period of time, this nation has changed its laws and attitudes toward domestic violence. No longer an issue that remains behind closed doors, domestic violence is increasingly seen as a pervasive, costly and preventable form of violence. And while the issue has gained recognition generally and much attention has been paid to the family and gender dynamics of violence among intimates, sparse attention has been paid to the intersection of domestic violence, employment, and cash assistance programs. There is much evidence that it can be very difficult, if not dangerous, for victims of domestic violence to seek and maintain paid employment to support themselves and their children. Welfare, unemployment insurance, and SSI have provided financial support and some measure of safety to many victims who have been unable to sustain employment.

The stated goal of the Massachusetts welfare reform is to break patterns of dependency and promote self-sufficiency through employment. The pattern of dependency the state is concerned with is that of women's continued reliance on welfare. Keeping in mind that one fifth of women on welfare have been abused in the past year, it appears that reducing the dependence of women and their children on batterers is an equally important, and perhaps more vital, goal.

In order to escape family violence, victims need a safe place to live and enough income to be able to support themselves and their children. TAFDC is one important program that can allow women to achieve both when all other safe avenues are blocked. The data from this survey suggest that abused women have significant work experience and are eager to participate in school or training programs. Like the vast majority of those who receive TAFDC, women who have been abused would like to be self-sufficient. Unfortunately, the current policies coupled with the known effects of domestic violence on the lives of its victims suggest that a large number of TAFDC recipients may well be unable, although not necessarily unwilling, to comply with at least some of the major components of the new welfare regulations. Abusive partners may sabotage entry into the labor force, causing the women to remain dependent upon their abusers. Other women may manage the entry process but be unable to sustain employment because of mental and physical consequences of current or recent abuse. This result serves no one well. Recipients and their children will lose much needed income, fail at their attempts to pull their lives together, and may even return to abusive situations. The Commonwealth may well not be able to succeed in replacing public assistance with earnings and if too many women are unable to successfully obtain and keep paid employment or complete community service placements, federal TANF funds may

be reduced.

The high prevalence of domestic violence among TAFDC recipients is now beyond doubt. Indeed, this study allows us to say with great certainty the *majority* of women and children who rely on TAFDC have suffered from domestic violence. Welfare policy makers and administrators must find ways to address these issues. The state has enormous independent leeway in the implementation of TAFDC and to some degree large control over federal TANF funds. We suggest the state adopt three goals in approaching the issue of domestic violence and structuring TAFDC rules and regulations.

< **The first and most immediate goal is to make sure that meeting the requirements of TAFDC promotes safety and immediately reduces the risk from batterers.**

This might include developing proactive screening provisions. It might also include an education campaign to notify victims of domestic abuse they may be exempt from many of the provisions.

< **The second goal is to ensure the provisions of TAFDC receipt not precipitate a return to an abusive situation.**

Specific policies might include exempting current and severely affected victims of domestic violence from immediate work requirements, extensions or exemption from time limits, and careful reconsideration of meeting "good cause" requirements. Women must be informed about good cause exemptions and made to feel safe claiming them.

< **The third goal is to help victims to move beyond domestic violence by getting the type of support they need to become economically self-sufficient.**

This would include provisions for appropriate counselling and battered women's social services, treatment for depression and emotional trauma, and education and training programs that promote self-sufficiency when victims of domestic violence are ready to participate in them. Collaboration among agencies is essential to this process.

A first step toward achievement of these goals will come through the Commonwealth's option to adopt the Family Violence Amendment to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (included in Appendix C). This provision would require that DTA screen for and identify individuals with a history of domestic violence. This amendment allows the Commonwealth to waive any federal or state requirements that make it more difficult for women to escape situations of domestic violence or that unfairly penalize a parent or a child who has been a

victim of domestic violence.

Although the domestic violence barrier to a successful transition from welfare to work must be removed for victims, there is every reason to believe that, with appropriate domestic violence services and with appropriate welfare to work services that accommodate the special issues of victims, most can be just as successful as non-victims in making the transition. Although not all domestic violence victims will need exemptions or waivers of time and other programmatic requirements, some will. The Amendment can provide the Commonwealth the necessary flexibility to design pathways out of welfare and poverty for battered women.

Regardless of how the administration and the legislature act, the input from professionals and advocates working in the field of domestic violence, as well as current and former recipients who have themselves been abused, will be vital in structuring protocols that fit the needs of families dealing with domestic violence.

This study has provided evidence that the experience of the serious crime of domestic violence is the norm rather than the exception in the lives of the tens of thousands of women receiving TAFDC in Massachusetts annually. All policies and programs affecting women and their children must be predicated on the recognition of the reality that domestic violence is a likely, rather than a rare, risk for these families. Programs can and should be designed to ensure that women and their children who have been or could become victims can successfully take steps toward self sufficiency and safety.

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