

# Four Evaluations of Welfare Reform What Will Be Learned

Peter H. Rossi

Edited by  
Douglas J. Besharov and Peter Germanis  
2001



Maryland School of Public Affairs  
**Welfare Reform Academy**  
Committee to Evaluate Welfare Reform  
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**The Welfare Reform Academy** was created in 1997 to help state and local officials, private social service providers, and other interested parties respond creatively to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the new welfare reform law signed by President Clinton in 1996. While the law pressures public officials and service providers to make their programs more efficient and better targeted, it also presents an unprecedented opportunity for states to reshape and improve their programs. The Academy will provide training in program design, implementation, and evaluation for the new TANF, Food Stamp, Medicaid, job training, child care, child welfare, and child support programs.

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**The University of Maryland**

*School of Public Affairs*

College Park, Maryland

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## Preface

This is one of a series of reports from the Committee to Review Welfare Reform Research. The committee was formed to help the public, other scholars, practitioners, and policymakers understand research on welfare reform and apply its lessons. Its purpose is to assess the quality and relevance of the most significant evaluation studies, identifying those findings that are sufficiently well-grounded to be regarded as credible. The committee members are experts in evaluation and related social science fields (see next page).

Between March 1994 and December 1999, welfare rolls fell an amazing 54 percent from their historic high of 5 million families. How much of this decline is a result of welfare reform and how much is the result of the economy? What are the effects on low-income families? About a quarter billion dollars is being spent on studies and surveys designed to answer these and other questions.

In this monograph, Peter H. Rossi describes the four major research projects assessing welfare reform: the Survey of Program Dynamics, the National Survey of America's Families, the Project on Devolution and Urban Change, and the Child Impact Experiments. Although Rossi believes that each research effort should be helpful in monitoring the well-being of low-income families, each also has particular weaknesses that limit its usefulness. Rossi concludes by suggesting various efforts to improve existing data collection efforts. This volume also includes the invited responses of the senior researchers from each of the agencies or organizations involved: Daniel H. Weinberg and Stephanie S. Shipp, U.S. Census Bureau; Kenneth Finegold and Fritz Scheuren, Urban Institute; Charles Michalopoulos, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation; and Howard Rolston, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We sincerely hope that the materials in this report aid in understanding this important topic.

DOUGLAS J. BESHAROV

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