Making Welfare Work
(for you!)

Center for Governmental Responsibility
Levin College of Law

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
Making Welfare Work  
(for you!)  

by Elizabeth McCulloch, J.D.
Acknowledgements

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You can also find this manual on the Internet at www.law.ufl.edu/cgr/publications.html. If you copy all or part of it, please include information about your source.

There are sure to be mistakes in this manual. If you spot any, or if you have ideas about other information that I should include, please email me at mcculloc@law.ufl.edu, subject line, “Making welfare work.” You can call me at 352 392 2237, or write to me at:

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Since the rules of welfare change often, we will update this manual periodically. I intend to update the Internet version each month. If you would like to receive revised pages each year to insert in your notebook, please fill out and send in the form on the next page.
Please send me yearly updates of “Making Welfare Work”

Your Name:

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Introduction

What Is Welfare?

Welfare means lots of things. In this book we use it to mean the cash assistance that families with children can get from the state of Florida. To get that help, some people have to be in the “welfare transition program.” In that program, the state is supposed to help them find paying work so they won’t need to get cash assistance for a long time. The state is also supposed to help with services they need so they can go to work.

Welfare in Florida has changed its name a lot of times in the past five years. We used to have AFDC, and then we had WAGES. Now we have temporary cash assistance (the monthly money) and welfare transition services. But lots of people still use the old names.

Some of the rules in the new program are the same as AFDC and WAGES, and some are different.

What Is This Book?

This book tells you what kind of help you can get from the welfare program. It explains what you have to do to get that help. It tells you how to be sure the program does what it is supposed to do for you. It tells you who makes the decisions in the program. And it tells you how you can get the people who make those decisions to listen to you. You are the real expert about how a program can help make your life and your children’s lives better.
We hope you will let your Regional Workforce Board, the new Workforce Florida, Inc., and the Legislature that writes the law know what they can do to help people.

**Using This Book**

We put special rules or definitions in a gray box so you can find them easily. There are also empty boxes where you can write notes. At the end of some sentences there are little numbers. If you look for the number in the “Endnotes” section, you will find where that rule is in the Florida law books.

The welfare rules change every year, and there is sometimes news you need to know about the program. There are two ways you can keep this book up-to-date. This book will be on the Internet at www.law.ufl.edu/cgr/publications.shtml and we will update it every month. If you don’t use the Internet, we can send you updated pages to put in this book. Just fill out the form on p. v and send it in if you would like to keep your book up-to-date.

If you have problems or questions about welfare, we hope this book will help you answer them. But you don’t have to do it alone! Your legal aid program can help you. Some programs are called Legal Aid, and some are called Legal Services. In this book we call them all Legal Aid. We have a list of these programs at the back of this book, in the “Directories” section.

Welfare rules are complicated. They have lots of details. If you have a welfare problem and you want help from Legal Aid, take this book with you. It can help them find the rule to help you. At the end of the book there are end notes that tell where to find the rules.
Where Do I Apply?

Usually you will apply to get welfare help at the Department of Children and Families office - called DCF - in your city or county. This office used to be called HRS. A lot of people still call it that.

You should also be able to apply at the One Stop Career Center.¹ There should be a “One Stop” in your county. One Stops are where you go to get help finding a job, learn about training programs, and get information about cash assistance, and welfare transition services. Some One Stops don’t have all the services there yet. It makes sense to call DCF or the One Stop first, before you go in, to find out the best place to go.

Notes:
Can I Get Temporary Cash Assistance?

Who can get welfare? People with children and not much money! In this chapter we talk about “temporary cash assistance.” In the next chapter we tell about other kinds of cash assistance.

Temporary cash assistance is like the old AFDC. It is the money you get every month from the state. They used to send you a check, but now they give you a card, like an ATM card from a bank. It’s called an electronic benefits transfer card, but most people just call it an EBT card.

You can get money every month if:

• Your dependent children live with you.
• Your relatives who are dependent children live with you
• You don’t have children living with you now, but you are in the last month of pregnancy. (You can get monthly money in the last three months of pregnancy if your doctor says you can’t work.)

If a child who lives with you is related to you by blood or marriage, you can probably get money each month. This includes grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces, cousin’s grandchildren - all kinds of relatives!
Maybe you share custody of your child with the other parent. Then the parent who usually has the child can get welfare. If you need help showing you are that parent, call your local Legal Aid office, listed in the “Directories” section.

A dependent child is one who has never been married, is still in school, and is under 19. Children who are not in school are only dependent until they are 18.

Your income has to be below a certain amount, and your resources - things like cars and bank accounts - can’t be worth more than a certain amount. You also have to do the things that the program requires. (See Cooperating with Child Support Enforcement on p. 6 and Work Requirements on p. 35. You will have to give them proof that your children have been immunized.)

If your child is going to be away from your home less than 30 days, you can still get money for her. But if your child is going away more than 30 days, you have to tell DCF as soon as you know. If you don’t tell them within five days, they can stop giving you money.

Are you an immigrant? A lot of people think immigrants can’t get cash assistance. That’s not true. It depends on what your immigration status is, and how long you’ve had that status. Usually, if you are a long-term lawful permanent resident, or a Cuban or Haitian, you will be able to get cash assistance. If DCF says you can’t get help because you are an immigrant, ask Legal Aid for help. You might be eligible.
Teen Parents

If someone under 18 has a child she can get cash assistance for herself and the child. The money won’t be paid to her, but to an “alternative payee.” There are some special rules that apply to her:

- If she hasn’t finished high school, she must go to school (or a training program) after the child is 12 weeks old.
- She has to take parenting classes.
- She has to live with her parent, or guardian, or other adult relative.

But, if she might be harmed by living with them, and DCF decides it’s not in her best interest to live with them, they have to help her find some other place to live, where she will have supervision. While they are doing this, they have to go ahead and pay the cash assistance to the “alternative payee.”

ALTERNATIVE PAYEE. Sometimes the money goes to somebody other than the parent or person who is taking care of the child. Alternative payees (lots of people call them “protective payees”) are used sometimes for children’s benefits when a parent is sanctioned, or reaches their time limits. They are also used when the parent is under 18. They have to use the money for the child.

Cooperating With Child Support Enforcement

To get welfare you have to tell DCF who the other parent of your child is. You might have to get a blood test. You need to keep appointments with the child support office, and testify in court if they need you.
If it would be dangerous for you or your child to cooperate, then you can be excused from this requirement. Be sure to tell your worker if it would be dangerous. If you need help proving that, contact Legal Aid.

Sometimes a woman is scared of the real father, so she names somebody else. This is a bad idea. A blood test will show it was not true. Then you will not be able to get cash assistance until DCF finds the real father and tests him. If you are scared of the children’s father, ask to be excused from cooperating. If your worker says no, Legal Aid may be able to help.

**Figuring It Out**

Do you wonder if you have too much money to get welfare? Do you want to know how much you can get? *Then grab a pencil and a calculator! You can figure it out.*

Remember that the law and DCF policy change often. And your situation may be special. So be sure and check with your local Legal Aid office before you do something based on what you figure out here.

The basic questions you’ll answer to figure out if you can get monthly money, and how much you’ll get, are:

- Who do I count in my family?
- What counts as a “resource”?

*Notes:*
• What counts as income?
• What do I deduct from income?
• What payment standard do I use?

This part of the book takes you step by step through answering those five questions.

Who do I count in my family?¹¹

You only count people who live with you. The people you count are the people the state gives you money for. We say they are “included in the grant.” You never count people who get SSI because the state won’t be giving you money for them. They get their own money from SSI.

First, count the number of your children, or children who are your relatives, who live with you. Only count children under 18, or children who are 18 but are still in school.¹² Do not count children who are not going to get any money because of the “family cap.” (See p. 9)

Next, if you are the parent of any of those children, count yourself. Both parents count, if they live together.

What if you are the grandmother or the stepfather or some other relative? If you are not the parent of any of the children, you can usually choose if you want to be counted. But some stepparents have to be counted.

If you are counted, you might get more money, depending on your income. But you will have a time limit, and work requirements.

If you are not counted, this will be called a “child only” case. The money might be less, but there won’t be any time limits or work rules.
“Family Cap” If a child is born more than ten months after you start getting welfare, he is treated differently from the other children. This is called the “family cap.” For the first child born under the family cap you will get half the usual amount of money. If you have more children after that while you are on welfare, you will get no extra money for them.13

Special rule for stepparents: Even if none of the children are yours, if your gross income is more than 185% of the federal poverty level for two people, you will have to be counted.14 If it is less, you can choose. Remember, if you are the parent of any of the children in the house, you will have to be counted, even if you don’t want money for your own kids.

Notes:

What Counts as a Resource15

If your family has more than $2000 worth of “resources” you are too rich for temporary cash assistance! (But you may be able to get other kinds of help. See Other Cash Assistance, and Support Services.)

Resources include cash and bank accounts, cars, and real estate.

But your home doesn’t count. Things that belong to somebody who gets SSI don’t count.
And you can subtract $8,500 from the blue book value of one car before you count the rest of it as part of your resources. If the work rules apply to you, and your family uses more than one car to get to work or school, you add up the value of all the cars. Then you subtract $8,500, and what’s left counts as part of your resources.

This means if you have $100 in the bank, and a car that is worth $10,000, you will be counted as having $1,600 in resources. ($10,000 car minus $8,500 = $1,500. Plus $100 cash, equals $1,600.) Your total resources are less than $2,000, so you will be able to get money each month if you fit the rest of the rules.

Notes:

What do you count as income?

Do count:

- Money you and most people who live with you earn
- Child support (But if one of the children gets no cash assistance because of the “family cap,” child support for her is not included. See the box about the family cap, p. 9)
- Alimony
- Social Security (except when you get it in combination with SSI)
Don’t count:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security you get with your SSI
- Money your children under 19 earn if they are in school
- Money paid for foster children\(^\text{17}\)
- Money you get for being a foster grandparent or in the RSVP program\(^\text{18}\)
- Incentive payments you get from the welfare transition program\(^\text{19}\)
- Non-cash items. If someone brings you groceries or diapers or clothes, these don’t count.

Even though these people aren’t included in the grant, some of their income has to be counted:

- Parents of a teen parent under 18 if the teen lives with them.\(^\text{20}\)
- Sponsor of an eligible non-citizen.\(^\text{21}\)
- Immigrant parents of a child who is a citizen or eligible immigrant child, even if the parents aren’t eligible themselves.\(^\text{22}\)

Notes:
Turning weekly income into monthly income:

- You figure out if you can get help by using your **monthly** income.
- If you get paid every week, multiply that amount by 4.3 to get your monthly income.
- If you get paid every two weeks, multiply that amount by 2.15 to get your monthly income.

Am I too rich for welfare?

Compare your monthly income to the poverty level table (see p. 20). If it is more than 185% of the poverty level for your size family, you are too rich to get monthly money. But you might be able to get other kinds of help. If your monthly income is the same as or less than 185% of the poverty level, keep reading to see if you can get monthly money.

What do I deduct from income? And how much money will I get?

We explain the Payment Standard on p. 14.

If you’re not earning money

- Add up all the income that counts. This is your “gross income.”
- Compare this to the Payment Standard for a family your size.
- If your gross income is more than the Payment Standard, you’re not eligible for monthly cash assistance.
- If it’s smaller, subtract it from the Payment Standard. That is how much money you should get.
If the money you should get is less than $10, you won’t get any money! But you can still get services.

*If you’re earning money*

There are two ways you can get some of your earnings not counted. This is called an “earned income disregard,” and we explain how it works below.

1. If you have gotten welfare for at least 1 of the last 4 months, you get the earned income disregard.24

2. If you haven’t been getting welfare in the last 4 months, add up all the income that counts. Subtract $90.25

   Compare this to the Payment Standard for a family your size. If it’s bigger than the Payment Standard, you’re not eligible for monthly cash assistance.

   If it’s smaller, you get the “Earned Income Disregard”

   Remember when you’re doing all this to use your monthly income.

   *Earned Income Disregard* (This means they don’t count some of the money you make when they figure out if you can get help.)

   • Add up all the income you earn.
   • Subtract $200.
   • Subtract $1/2 of what is left.
   • Add any unearned income you have.
   • This is your “gross income.”
• If it’s bigger than the Payment Standard for a family your size, you can’t get monthly money.

• If it’s smaller, subtract it from the Payment Standard. That is how much money you should get each month.

If you have a child born more than 10 months after you apply for monthly help, you get less additional money for that child. See Family Cap, on p. 9.

Notes:

The Payment Standard

The Payment Standards are based on your family size and the amount of rent or mortgage you are supposed to pay. (They call this the “shelter obligation.”) For child-only cases, the caretaker relative decides how much “rent” the child is supposed to pay.

To use the Payment Standard, you have to figure out which shelter obligation you use.

If you don’t have any rent or mortgage to pay, or if you are a teen parent living with your parents, you are in Level 1.

If you have to pay up to $50 rent or mortgage, you are in Level 2.

If you have to pay more than $50, or if you are homeless, you are in Level 3.
<table>
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<th>Level One Zero Shelter Obligation</th>
<th>Level Two Zero to $50 Shelter Obligation</th>
<th>Level Three More than $50 Shelter Obligation</th>
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Other Cash Assistance

There are other programs in the welfare law that can help people with money or services. Some of these are to help people so they won’t need to get money every month. They are called diversion programs. You don’t have to be eligible to get monthly money to get this help. Your income has to be 200% of the poverty level or less.\textsuperscript{27}

Relocation Help\textsuperscript{28}

Maybe you can’t get a job where you live. You might live in a place where there are hardly any jobs, or where you can’t get transportation. Maybe you have found a job somewhere else at higher pay or with better benefits than the job you have now. Maybe you could get training in a different place that would help you get ahead in your work. Maybe you need to get away from domestic violence to hold a job. Or maybe you could hold a job if you lived near your family. Your welfare program can pay for the cost of moving. You can also get transitional benefits or diversion benefits after you move.

If welfare paid your moving costs to get you and your children away from domestic violence, you can still get monthly cash assistance. But if they paid moving costs for some other reason, you will have to agree not to apply for monthly cash assistance for 6 months, except in an emergency.

Up-Front Diversion\textsuperscript{29}

Maybe you don’t need to get money every month. Maybe you just need some help to get you out of a jam, so you can find a job, or keep your job.
At the One Stop they can help you with services or money. You will have to agree not to apply for monthly cash assistance for three months, unless an emergency comes up. And you can only get this kind of help one time in five years.  

The worker has to look at all your circumstances and barriers to getting and keeping a job to see if you can get this help. He may need estimates of what it would take to fix your problem. He is supposed to see if other community agencies can help out. But he is supposed to get you help within 7 days of the time you apply.

If you have a job, or you lost your job in the last 60 days, your DCF worker should automatically see if you are eligible for this. But even if you haven’t had a job in a while, if you are interested in this one time help, tell the worker.

Here are some examples of emergencies they can help you with:

- Your car broke down and needs repairs
- You need to catch up your rent
- You can’t pay your light bill
- You need medical help

They can also help with other emergencies that aren’t listed here.

First, they will try to help you get a job if you don’t have one. Then they see if there are services, like child care or transportation, that you need. If your emergency can best be fixed with money, they can give you up to $1,000 to solve your problem.

**Diversion to Strengthen Families**

This help is for people with children whose income is no more than 200% of the poverty level. (See poverty level table on p. 20). It lets you get the same kind of services people who get monthly money can get: job
placement, training and education, child care, transportation, counseling. You can also get a RITA account.

To get this help, you have to agree not to apply for monthly money for six months, unless an emergency comes up.

**Diversion to Prevent Child Abuse or Neglect**

Sometimes the Department removes children from their families because they are homeless, or their home is dangerous. This part of the law lets the Department help the family fix the problem so the children can stay with them. You can get services or a one-time payment of money under this program. You will still be able to apply for other help, like monthly money or support services for working.

**Diversion for Domestic Violence Victims**

If you are a pregnant woman, or you have children, and you need help because of domestic violence, you can get services or a one-time payment of up to $1,000 to help you. You will still be able to apply for other help if you need it later, like monthly money or support services for working.

**Teen Parent Diversion**

If you are a teen parent you can get services to help you finish your education and avoid getting pregnant. Even if you don’t have a child, you can get these services if the Department thinks you are “at risk” of getting pregnant. You will still be able to apply for other help if you need it later, like monthly money or support services for working.
Cash Assistance Severance Benefit

If you have been getting monthly money for 6 months or more, you can stop getting that and get one big check instead. You have to have a job that will probably last at least 6 months. You have to give the program information about your employment and earnings. You have to agree not to apply for monthly money in the next six months unless there is an emergency. Then you can get $1,000 at one time. This will only count as one month toward your time limit. You can still get food stamps, Medicaid and child care if your income makes you eligible.

The severance benefit is one reason it’s important to let your worker know if you decide to go off cash assistance because you found a job!

Notes:
The Poverty Level

Some services are only for people whose income is below the poverty level, or a certain percent of the poverty level. Here is a table to show you how much that is.

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<td>12</td>
<td>$3,272</td>
<td>$6,053</td>
<td>$6,544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These dollar amounts are monthly income. Multiply weekly income by 4.3 to get monthly income. Multiply biweekly income by 2.15 to get monthly income.
Support Services

A special note: Education and training aren’t called “support services.” But they are one of the most important benefits you can get from the welfare program. They can count as a work activity, and we tell about them in the Work Requirements section. See p. 35.

Support services are things that help you get or stay in a job or attend school. Child care, transportation, books, counseling, uniforms and tools for a job, are all support services. Your Regional Workforce Board decides which support services they will pay for.

To get support services, the activity you’re in has to be approved by the welfare program as a work activity. But if you are doing your work activity and also going to school, you can get support services to help you do that, too.39

Your Regional Workforce Board doesn’t have to give you these services if they have run out of money. The Florida Legislature decides how much money to give them for these services.

Transportation

You can get transportation help to get to and from work and school, and to get your children to child care. This could be cash or bus tokens. It could be a van service. They can also pay you back for transportation costs you already paid, if you have receipts.

If you have your own car, you can get a voucher or a gas card to buy gas. If your car needs fixing, they can pay for it if you have an estimate from a car
repair shop. Some Regional Workforce Boards have a program to give donated, second-hand cars to people on welfare.

If you need your car to go to work or school, you may be able to get help to pay for your car insurance, your drivers license, and your car registration.

If you are getting temporary cash assistance, the program should pay almost all of your child care costs for children under 13 when you are working or looking for work. They may also pay child care while you are in school. You will probably have to pay a small fee for child care, depending on what your income is.

If your children are between 13 and 17 but have “special needs,” you can get child care for them too.

You can choose any kind of child care you want, as long as it is legal. If you don’t want your children in a day care center, you can use a registered family child care home or some other informal arrangement. A family member can be paid to provide child care at half the professional rate, after taking a three-hour course. If you don’t already have child care you will be sent to the local community child care coordinating agency. They can help you find child care.

RITAs

If you get a job, your Regional Workforce Board can use their money to set up an account for you, called a Retention Incentive Training Account, or RITA. The accounts are to help people stay in jobs and get better jobs. You can use the money to pay for education or training from approved programs in your area, or support services to help you get education or training.
Other Services

Welfare will help pay for a lot of other support services so you can work or be in a work activity. For instance, they may be able to help you and your family get counseling. It can be counseling for personal or family problems. It can be counseling for drug or alcohol problems.

They will also help you pay for things like books, tools, clothing, fees and other things you need to work.

Your case worker is supposed to tell you about support services you can have. But that doesn’t always happen. Be sure to ask for the services you need. If the worker says they don’t have those services in your area, it’s important to let your Regional Workforce Board know people need those services to work.

Examples of Useful Services

Your worker at the One Stop has assigned you to computer class. The teacher tells you to buy a special book about computers, but it costs $40. Welfare can buy it for you. The book is a support service because it will help you with class.

Notes:
The One Stop worker assigned you to look for a job (called “job search”).
Your car breaks down while you are out looking. Welfare can help you get
your car fixed. Getting your car fixed is a support service because you need
it to look for a job.

You find a job as a security guard. You need a uniform and a license.
Welfare can pay for those. The uniform and license are support services
because you need them to take the job.
Transitional Benefits

You might decide you don’t want to get money every month anymore. Maybe you got a job, or maybe it’s just too much hassle for too little money. There are three reasons why it’s important to let your worker know that you are leaving welfare.

1. You can still get child care and Medicaid and other help.

2. If you have a job, you can get $1,000 as your last payment (see “Cash Assistance Severance Benefit” on p. 19).

3. If you just stop doing the things you’re supposed to do, with out telling your worker, you may end up with a sanction on your record. This will stay there, and could cause you a lot of headaches if you need help in the future.

When you stop getting monthly money, you can still get help from the welfare program, and from other programs. Help you get after your monthly money stops is called “transitional benefits,” because it’s supposed to help you make a transition from getting welfare to supporting your family with what you earn. Your Regional Workforce Board decides which transitional services they will pay for.

Your welfare program doesn’t have to give you these services (except Medicaid) if they have run out of money. The Florida Legislature decides how
much money to give them for these services. Medicaid is a separate program, and if you meet the rules, you get it even if they run out of welfare money.

**Transportation**

You can get help with transportation that you need for work or school for two years after your welfare stops, **no matter why it stops**. They can help you pay for a driver’s license, for fixing your car, and for your tags and insurance. You can even get help paying for a car. You can also get bus passes or help paying for gas.

**Child Care**

If you go off cash assistance because you got a job, you can get help with child care for two years after your check stops, as long as your income is 200% of the poverty level or less. This is also true if you don’t go on monthly cash assistance but get “up front diversion” (see p. 16).

After that, you can get help with child care if your income is 150% of the poverty level or less.

**Education and Training**

If you are working or looking for work, you can get money for training or education for two years after you stop getting monthly money. You can use this to upgrade your job, or train for a new kind of job. If the program you want offers financial aid, you will need to apply for that before you can get help from the One Stop.

Your Regional Workforce Board can also decide to provide support services, like child care or transportation help, for people who are getting education or training after they stop getting the monthly money. If they aren’t
doing this, remember you need to let them know how important it is to you. (See “Making Welfare Better” p. 52).

**Medicaid**

If you’ve been on monthly cash assistance for 3 of the last 6 months, and you have children, and your cash assistance stops because you are earning too much money, you can get Medicaid for 6 more months. You don’t have to apply again to get this, and it doesn’t matter how much money you are earning.

After that, you can get another 6 months of Medicaid if your income is less than 185% of the poverty level, and you go to DCF and apply for it. You do need to report your income and child care costs to DCF.

If you’ve been on monthly cash assistance for 3 of the last 6 months, and your cash assistance stops because you are getting too much alimony or child support, you can get 4 more months of Medicaid. This is called “extended Medicaid” instead of transitional Medicaid.

If you stop getting cash assistance because you have reached your time limit, and your income hasn’t gone up, you and your children still can get Medicaid. If your income *has* gone up, be sure to ask your worker if you and your children can still get Medicaid.

If you are sanctioned for not doing your work requirement, you and your children still get Medicaid.

If you are sanctioned for not cooperating with child support enforcement, your children still get Medicaid.
Food Stamps

If your cash assistance stops because you get a job, or reach your time limit, you can probably still get food stamps if you’re not earning too much. If you are sanctioned for not doing your work activity, you could lose your food stamps too. If you’re sanctioned for some other reason you can probably still get food stamps.

Your worker is supposed to tell you about transitional support services you can have. But she can’t do that if you don’t come in to talk to her when you decide to leave welfare!

So be sure to talk to her and tell her the services you need. If the worker says they don't have those services in your area, it’s important to let your local Regional Workforce Board know people need those services to work.

On the next few pages we tell you the rules about hardship exemptions, time limits, work requirements and sanctions. They can be confusing. On p. 43 we have a chart to help you figure them out.
There are two kinds of time limits.

Lifetime time limit: You can only get cash welfare for 48 months in your adult life. This includes money you got in another state, before you moved to Florida. It also includes money you got for yourself and your baby when you were still a teenager.

At-a-time time limit: Most families can only get monthly money for 24 months in 5 years. Some families can get the monthly money for 36 months in 6 years.

Does Everybody Have a Time Limit?

Almost everyone who gets welfare has time limits, but these people don’t:

- People who get a disability check: SSI or SSDI.
- People who have to take care of a disabled family member.
- Children who live with their relatives, if only the children get money.
Who Gets The Longer (36 Month) Time Limit?\textsuperscript{54}

- Parents under age 24 who haven’t finished high school
- Parents under age 24 who have worked less than three months in the last year
- People who have gotten temporary cash assistance (this includes AFDC or WAGES) for 36 months in the last five years.

No matter how little your monthly money is, every month you get it counts toward the time limit. So if you are working and getting very little money from welfare, think about going off welfare. That way if you need it in the future, you will still have time left from the 48 months. You can still get Medicaid, and help with child care and transportation, even though you stop getting cash assistance. See “Transitional Benefits” on p. 25. Also see “Cash Assistance Severance Benefits” on p. 19.

What If My At-A-Time Time Limit is Close and I Don’t Have a Job?

You might be able to get up to 12 more months of welfare. This is called an extension.

Another way to get more time is a hardship exemption. We tell about these in the next section, on p. 32.

Reasons for an extension

- Work credit extension. You can get another month of cash assistance for every month that you had a job.\textsuperscript{55}
• Treatment extension. You can get another month of cash assistance for every month that you followed the rules of a mental health or drug or alcohol treatment program. You can get this extension when you successfully finish the program. You can only get it once.\textsuperscript{56}

• Disability applicants. If you are waiting for SSI or SSDI to decide if you will get disability checks, you automatically get a extension until they make their decision.\textsuperscript{57}

**Should I ask for more time?**

Just because you can get an extension doesn’t mean you should use it. This is because every month you get cash assistance counts against your four-year lifetime limit. If you are working, and getting a very little money from welfare, ask yourself if you can live on just your earnings. If you need help again in the future, you will still have some months left to get money. Remember, when you stop getting monthly money you can still get transitional services, like child care, transportation, and education and training. This is explained in “Transitional Benefits,” on p. 25.

If you do need the extension, be sure to contact your worker when you get a notice that you are running out of time. Be sure that you got credit for the months you were earning money, or the months you were in a treatment program.

**Notes:**
Hardship Exemptions

You can get up to 24 months more of cash assistance if you get a hardship exemption. A hardship exemption can get you cash assistance even past the 48 month lifetime limit. But the state can only give these exemptions to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the people in the caseload. There are different reasons why you can get a hardship exemption.

Reason #1 - Diligent Participation

You did every activity you were supposed to. Or you couldn’t do your activity because of something you couldn’t help. You’ve only had one work sanction in 18 months. Still, you can’t find a job. Or maybe it was very hard for you to have a job while you were getting cash assistance because

- your child was under six and you can’t get child care, or
- you were incapacitated, or
- you had a baby less than 3 months old, or
- you had to take care of a disabled family member, or
- you were a teen parent and just got your high school diploma or GED

Reason #2 - Significant Barriers

Even if you have had lots of sanctions, you may be able to get extra months of cash assistance if there are things that make it hard for you to find work or go to work. These things include
• You don’t have child care or transportation
• You live in a place with high unemployment
• You are homeless
• You have a felony conviction
• You work, but not enough to support your family
• You are illiterate
• English is not your main language

**Reason #3 - Child Protection**

If stopping your cash assistance would mean your children had to go into emergency shelter or foster care, your children can go on getting money. But the money will only be for the children, and it will be paid to somebody else to be used for the children. This person is called a protective payee. (That’s the same as an alternative payee. We explain that on p. 6).

**Reason #4 - Domestic Violence**

If violence in your home prevents you from doing what you’re supposed to do in the welfare program, you can get extra time on welfare.

**Reason #5 - Teen Parent**

A teen parent can get up to 24 months of cash assistance after getting her high school diploma or GED, even if this takes her past her 36-month limit.
Reason #6 - Applying for Disability

If you have applied for disability from SSI or Social Security, you can have an extension from time limits until you get the final decision on whether you will get disability. But if you lose your disability case, the months you kept getting monthly money will count against your 48-month lifetime limit.

How Do I Ask For More Time?

You ask your worker. Your worker should meet with you before you reach your time limit, and ask if you want an exemption. The worker decides whether you should have more time. Then a group of people reviews that decision. If the worker and the reviewers say no, you should ask for a “fair hearing.” Legal aid can help you with this.

Be sure to look on p. 50 to learn about fair hearings.

Notes:
Work Requirements

Usually if you get cash assistance you have to be in a “work activity.” This is usually paid work or volunteer work, but it can be looking for a job or going to school or training.

Who Has to Work?

People 16 and over who get cash assistance have to work unless they are exempt from working. Single parents have to work 30 hours a week. In two-parent families, the parents’ work hours have to total 35 hours a week. (If you are getting mental health or drug or alcohol treatment your total hours of work can be reduced by 5 hours a week.)

Who is Exempt?

You are exempt if you:

• Are under 16
• Get SSI or Social Security disability checks
• Don’t get money for yourself, but only for the children who stay with you
• Have a child under 3 months old (But if you haven’t finished high school you may have to go to school)
• You are also exempt from work requirements if you have no time limit. See p. 29 to learn who has no time limit.
• (Also look at p. 41, which tells you what the law says about “good cause” for not doing your work activity.)

What Counts as Work?\textsuperscript{70}

**Job search and job preparation.** These can go on for up to six weeks when you start getting monthly money.

**A job you get paid for.** This could include a work-study job when you are a student, or on-the-job training with a private employer. Your employer may be able to get some of your salary paid by the government. The One Stop staff should have information about this that you can give to an employer.

You or your employer should ask the One Stop staff about Work Supplementation, and other ways to get some of your salary paid by the government.

**Community service work experience**, or CWEP. They used to call this workfare. It means you work enough hours to earn your monthly money and food stamps at an hourly minimum wage rate.\textsuperscript{71}

**Taking care of children.** If you take care of somebody’s children while she does her community service work, you can count that as a work activity.

You should not be assigned to CWEP for a long time. Be sure your plan includes what you need to get a paid job. This could be training, or counseling, or English lessons. It’s your case manager’s job to help you figure out what services you need, and arrange for you to get them.
Work experience. If you don’t have work experience already, you can be in an on-the-job training program. If you are assigned to this, you will still be getting monthly money instead of a paycheck. The training should be aimed at employment.

Job skills training which you need to meet the needs of a specific job or industry. This could include English or Spanish language classes with the training.

Vocational education and training for up to 12 months. After 12 months, you can still get vocational education and training. But you’ll have to do other work activities too.

The law says lots of people who get cash assistance could be getting vocational education for a year. But not very many people are. If that’s what you want, ask your case manager about it. First you’ll have to show you’re willing to work, either in a job or in CWEP. And you may have to take a remedial course first. But don’t let them leave you in a dead-end job if there’s training you want. Be sure your plan moves you toward training!

High school or GED classes, if you haven’t finished high school or your GED. This can include literacy training. If you are under 19 you may be required to go to high school or GED classes. If you are 19 or older, you can only count 10 hours a week in education; the rest of your 30 required hours have to be in a different work activity.

Education related to employment. If you are under 19 and haven’t finished high school or your GED, you can get education services to prepare you for a job in a specific field.
Special programs for teen parents

**Extended education and training.** Your regional workforce board can set up a plan for people to get more education and have it count toward their work hours. If they haven’t done this, and you think they should, let them know! (See Making Welfare Better on p. 55).

When you meet with your case manager for the first time, you’ll make a plan for what you’re going to do as a work activity. Be sure your plan takes you where you want to go.

*Notes:*
Sanctions

If you don’t do your work activity, and you don’t have a good reason, you can be sanctioned. You can also be sanctioned if you don’t help enforce child support. A sanction means they cut off your money and usually your food stamps. But they don’t cut off your Medicaid. (See the end of this section for information about child support sanctions)

Will they cut off my food stamps? The food stamp law says certain people don’t have to work to get food stamps - they have an “exemption.” If you are one of those people, you will still get food stamps when your monthly money is cut off. See the end of this section for information about food stamps work exemptions.

Work Requirements Sanctions

The first time you get sanctioned DCF will stop your cash for at least ten days. When the ten days is over, they’ll start your cash again when you start doing your work activity. Your food stamps will be cut off for at least ten days too. If you are the head of household, your family’s food stamps will stop too.
The second time you get sanctioned they stop your cash for at least a month. After the month is up they will start it again on the first day of the next month, or when you start doing your work activity, whichever is later. Your food stamps will be cut off for at least three months. If you are the head of household, your family’s food stamps will stop too.

The third time you get sanctioned they stop your cash for at least three months and your food stamps for at least six months. After the 3 months is up, they will start it again on the first day of the next month or when you start doing your work activity, whichever is later. If you’re head of household, your family’s food stamps will stop too.

On the second and third times, DCF can keep your money and food stamps coming for the children by paying it to someone else who will use it for the children. That could be a close friend or relative. This person is called an alternative payee or a protective payee. If DCF can’t find someone to do this, they may get “protective services” to come to your home and see if your children are okay.73

You can see why it’s really important to let your case manager know if you can’t do your work activity. He may be able to help you so your cash assistance won’t be stopped.

If you don’t do your work requirement, your worker has to write you before he asks DCF to cut off your money. Then you can tell him why you didn’t do your work activity. He should help you find the services you need to go to work, like child care or transportation.

If DCF sends you a letter saying they are going to sanction you, don’t give up! If you had a good reason for not doing your work activity, ask for a hearing. You can call and ask for a hearing. But it’s better to do it in writing. You can write a letter using the model letter on p. 49. Make a copy to keep, and send the letter right away. It’s even better if you can deliver it in person. When you do, ask them to stamp the date you gave it to them on your copy. Then call Legal Aid and ask them to help you with the hearing.
If you ask for a hearing within ten days of the date on DCF’s letter, your money will keep coming. If you wait, you have 90 days to ask for the hearing, but your money will stop until the decision is made.

The law says these are good reasons for not doing your activity:74

- no child care for child under 6
- doctor says you can’t work75
- you’ve applied for disability
- care for disabled family member76
- you can’t do it because of domestic violence - then you and your case manager need to make a different plan that will keep you safe
- you are in a residential program for drug, alcohol, or mental health treatment77
- circumstances beyond your control

**Food Stamp Work Exemptions**78

You don’t have to work to get food stamps if you:

- are younger than 16 or older than 59
- are 16 or 17 and are in school and not head of your family
- are physically or mentally unfit to work
- you have to take care of your child under 6
- you have to take care of a disabled person
• you are getting unemployment compensation
• you are participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program
• you are a seasonal farm worker who will be starting work in 30 days
• you are a school employee off for the summer
• you are in school or a training program half-time
• you are in college or graduate school half-time, in certain situations

Child Support Sanctions

If you don’t cooperate with child support enforcement they will cut off all your cash assistance. They will start it again when you cooperate, unless you named the wrong father. Then they won’t start it until they find the real father. If you get a letter saying you are being sanctioned, and you have good cause not to cooperate, answer the letter right away. Ask for a hearing, and then contact Legal Aid for help. See Cooperating with Child Support Enforcement on p. 6, and Making Welfare Work for You on p. 44.

Notes:
Summary: Exceptions to time limits, work requirements, and sanctions

<table>
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<th>No time Limit</th>
<th>Can Get Hardship Exemption (makes time limit longer) If Only 1 Sanction</th>
<th>Can Get Hardship Exemption With More Sanctions</th>
<th>Don’t Have To Work</th>
<th>Have To Work But “Good Cause” Not To (No Sanction)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Doctor says can’t work</td>
<td>No child care for child under 6</td>
<td>Disability check</td>
<td>You’ve applied for disability</td>
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<td>Cares for disabled family member</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
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<td>Check only for kids work</td>
<td>Baby under 3 months</td>
<td>No transportation</td>
<td>Check only for kids</td>
<td>Doctor says you can’t</td>
</tr>
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<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Baby under 3 months</td>
<td>No child care for child under 6</td>
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<td>Domestic violence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In residential treatment program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Circumstances beyond your control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English not your main language</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High unemployment in area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kids would need foster care (money continues only for kids)</td>
<td></td>
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Making Welfare Work For You

(Parts of this chapter are adapted with permission from a Consumer’s Guide to Missouri Welfare Policies, from the Reform Organization of Welfare (ROWEL) in St Louis, Missouri.)

What’s the best way to get what you need from the welfare system?

- Keep your worker informed - of changes in your income, of what you need, of problems you have.
- Give your worker information in writing, and keep a copy.
- Ask questions - about services you need, about rules you don’t understand.

You can see from this manual that the rules of welfare are complicated. They might confuse you sometimes. They confuse the DCF workers and One Stop workers, too! That means the workers don’t always follow the rules. This part of the manual tells you how you can make welfare work for you.

To Prevent Mistakes

1. Read what they send you.

When you get a letter from DCF or your worker at the One Stop, read it right away. Be sure you understand what it says. Some of these letters are not written very clearly. If you have trouble understanding it, ask your
friends or family for help. If they can’t help you, call your worker and ask her to explain it.

2. Save the paperwork.

Keep all the papers or letters that come from the DCF or the One Stop or the Regional Workforce Board. If you put them all in one box or folder, you will be able to find them when you need to. Some people like to get a 3-ring notebook and put each paper in it when it comes. That way the papers will stay in order and be easier to find.

3. Put things in writing.

Whenever you talk to a worker, in person or on the phone, write down the person’s name. Also write down the date and time, and what they told you. Put this in your folder too. If you keep your papers in a notebook, you can put some blank pages in the notebook for writing this information. When the worker calls, tell her to “hold on” while you go get your notebook!

Notes:
4. Keep copies.

DCF and the One Stop need lots of information from you. When you take a paper to the agency, ask the receptionist or your worker to make a copy and stamp the date on it. In case the paper gets lost, you can prove you gave it to them! Keep all your copies in your folder or notebook.

**What If There is a Mistake?**

**What If You Disagree with What They Say?**

Sometimes you want services your worker says you can’t have. Sometimes you get a letter saying they are stopping your benefits. If you think they are not following the rules, you can try to get the decision changed.

Here are some steps you can take to fix problems:

**You can meet with your caseworker**

1. Be sure you say clearly what your problem is, or what it is you need. You can write down your own “problem statement” to explain what you need. Examples:

   “My son’s daycare center won’t let him come back because he gets in fights. I need help to find daycare for the evening shift. Child care resources says they don’t have any evening slots.”

   “I should have food stamps today but my card is still showing no money.”

   “My doctor wrote a letter saying I can’t work but my worker says it’s not good enough.”

2. If your worker says you have to do something you don’t think you have to do, or says you can’t have services you think you should have, ask her to explain why. Write down what she says, or ask her to write it down.
3. Sometimes your DCF or One Stop worker may tell you something is a rule that isn’t in this book. Ask her to give you a copy of that rule.

If she doesn’t have it written down, maybe she has made a mistake and it is not a rule.

4. If the worker can’t help you, ask to talk to her supervisor. If the supervisor is not available, get her name and phone number and call her.

3. When you talk with the supervisor tell her your problem. Use your problem statement if you wrote it down. Tell her what the worker says.

4. Write down what the supervisor tells you, or ask her to write it down. If there’s something you don’t understand, ask her to explain.

5. If you can’t get the problem fixed just talking with the worker and her supervisor, you will need to figure out your next step.

If your problem is at the One Stop, tell them you want to file a grievance. If they say there is no grievance procedure, you should call your local Legal Aid. If they can’t help you, you can get some good advice from Florida Legal Services, at their toll free number.

If your problem is with DCF, you should ask for a fair hearing. We tell you more about fair hearings on p. 50.

The rules change a lot, and they aren’t simple! Sometimes different offices make mistakes, or even make up rules when they shouldn’t. If they can’t show you a copy of a rule, you should call your local Legal Aid, or Florida Legal Services. If they do show you a copy of a rule, I’d love it if you’d send it to me! (The address is in front of the book.)
You can write a letter to your caseworker

The best way to let the agency know what you want is to write a letter. You should keep a copy. If you take it to the agency, be sure they stamp the date on your copy. If you mail it, you might want to pay extra and send it “return receipt requested.” Then you will get a card back in the mail showing the agency got your letter.

Your letter should have these 7 parts:

• The date you write the letter

• Your caseworker’s name and address

• Your name, address, Social Security number, and phone number

• Tell what your problem is, and why you disagree with what the agency is doing

• Tell what you want the agency to do

• Ask the worker to answer your letter

• Your signature

Here is a sample letter (see next page):
(Date)
January 1, 2000

(Caseworkers name and address)
To: Wanda Worker
    Department of Children and Families
    1234 Wages Way
    Your town, Florida, Zip code

(Your name, address, and phone)
From: Lily Lively
    5678 Belleview Road
    Your town, Florida, Zip code

(Your Social Security number)
SS #987-654-3210

I don’t agree with the actions in my case:

(Here you say what your problem is)
    I brought my caseworker a doctor’s letter that says I can’t work. She says it’s not good enough and I have to work. Now she says she will sanction me. I can’t work because I am pregnant and have to stay in bed or I could lose my baby.

    I ask that you take the following steps:

(Here you say what you want them to do)
    Don’t sanction me.

    Tell me what you need to know from my doctor.

    Please let me know that you got this letter. If you can’t do what I asked, please consider this letter a request for a hearing.

(Sign your name)
What If They Send Me a Letter Saying I Can’t Get Benefits, or I’m Being Sanctioned?

Asking for a hearing

If you get a letter that tells you this, it will say that you have ten days to ask for a hearing. If you do that within ten days of the date on the letter, they can’t stop your benefits until there’s been a hearing, and the hearing officer has decided you can’t get benefits. But even if you don’t ask in time to keep your benefits coming, you can still ask for a hearing. Then if the hearing officer agrees that you are right and the agency made a mistake, you will get your benefits.

Getting ready for a hearing

If you want help getting ready for the hearing, call Legal Aid and see if they can help you. Maybe they can tell you what to do, or maybe they will represent you at the hearing. If they can’t help you:

1. Ask your worker for a copy of your case file. Go through the file and see if they have all the information you gave them. See if they wrote down when you asked for help or told them you were having a problem. See if there is information in the file that isn’t true.

2. Ask your caseworker to give you a copy of the rule that says why your case was changed or closed.

3. If there is information missing that you already gave them, take copies of what you have given them to the hearing. If you have information that you didn’t give them yet, bring it to the hearing if you can. Tell the hearing officer why you didn’t give them the information before. If you can’t get the information you need, tell the hearing officer why.

4. If you can, get proof of what you are telling them. If you didn’t keep an appointment because your child was sick, you can get a note from the
child’s doctor. If he didn’t go to the doctor, but your neighbor knew he was home sick, your neighbor can come tell the hearing officer.

5. Look in this manual to see if the rules are being followed.

**If your case worker or supervisor fixes your problem after you ask for a hearing:**

Be sure they tell you in writing what they are going to do. Then write a note to the hearing officer and your case worker saying you don’t need a hearing because the problem is fixed. Keep a copy.

**When you go to the hearing**

1. Bring a friend with you, even if they don’t have evidence to give. It will make you feel more comfortable.

2. Take all the information you need: copies of what you gave them, copies of rules, receipts, letters. Take whatever you have that helps prove your case.

3. Tell your story clearly. Answer questions politely. If you don’t understand what someone is saying, or you don’t understand a question, say so.

4. Try to stick to the facts that make a difference in your case. If the caseworker was rude to you, that probably doesn’t make a difference. But if you got to your appointment on time, and waited for the caseworker, and she didn’t show up, that makes a difference if they’re saying you missed an appointment.

**(If you can’t go to the hearing, call your caseworker and the hearing officer and tell them why. Ask them to reschedule the hearing.)**
Making Welfare Better

Who’s in charge here?

To get welfare to work for you, it helps to know who makes the rules. This part will tell you who makes some of the rules in the welfare program. If you think the rules should be different, or if you think the rules aren’t being followed, you can get in touch with these people.

Regional Workforce Board, or “RWB”

The volunteers on this Board run the welfare services program where you live. Some people call it the WAGES board. A lot of the people on this Board own businesses. Most RWBs don’t have poor people on them.

The RWB decides:

• Who will give services (like training or support services) to people who get cash assistance.

• How much money to spend on different kinds of services

• What kind of programs you will have where you live

The RWB has contracts with different agencies and companies to give services to people who get cash assistance. Those agencies and companies have to do what they say they will do in their contract.

The RWB needs to follow the law. They need to know how their program is working. They hire staff, or they hire a company to organize their meetings, and give them the information they need.

If you want to let the RWB know what’s happening, you can call the staff or company that works for them and ask them to send you a letter whenever the Board is going to have a meeting. You should ask them what you need to do to get a chance to talk at that meeting. Some RWBs listen to the public at the beginning of the meeting, and some at the end of the meeting.
Department of Children and Families - DCF.  
(Used to be called HRS)

This is where you apply to get cash assistance, food stamps, and Medicaid. You might also be able to apply at your One Stop Center. Your DCF worker is in charge of getting you your money. He is also in charge of sanctions. DCF has to follow the laws the Florida Legislature makes.

Case management contractor

The local RWB has a contract with a company (or sometimes more than one company) to manage your case. They have to do what they said they would do in their contract with the local RWB.

Your case worker at the One Stop works for that company. She is called a career manager. Her job is to help you figure out what you are good at and what you want to do, to help you find a job, and help you get the services you need to go to work. She also should help you get training or education if that is what you want.

Your DCF worker and your One Stop worker have to follow the law. If you have a problem with one of them that you can’t work out, remember you can talk to their supervisor. If that doesn’t help, you should let the people who make the rules know what’s going on. And you can contact Legal Aid for help.
**Workforce Florida, Inc.**

Volunteers run this Board, too. They are mostly business owners. There are also some people from government agencies, and from labor unions. There are few, if any, poor people on this Board. But these volunteers decide what your Regional Workforce Board should be doing.

**Agency for Workforce Innovation**

This is a new agency in the Florida Department of Management Services. It will make rules for how your local Regional Workforce Board, and the companies who have contracts with them, do their job.

**Florida Legislature and the Governor**

If you want changes in welfare, you can let them know. They decide:

- Who can get welfare
- How much money a family should get each month
- What counts as a work activity
- How sanctions are supposed to work
- Who has time limits
- How long time limits are
- What kind of people should be on the state Workforce Florida, Inc., and your Regional Workforce Board

The Florida Legislature and the Governor also decide how much money to spend in the state for things like child care, transportation, and other support services. Workforce Florida, Inc. and your Regional Workforce Board decide when and how to spend the money.
Congress and the President

This is the federal government. They give money to Florida for the welfare program. The federal law says Florida has to:

- use some of their own money to help low-income people too.
- have lifetime time limits of five years or less. (Florida has a four-year time limit.)
- have most grown-ups who get monthly welfare money do some kind of work.

The federal government also makes most of the rules about Medicaid and Food Stamps.

Making Welfare Work Better

Now that you know who makes the decisions, maybe you will want to change the decisions they make! Here are some examples:

Q I don’t like the way my DCF worker talks to me. What can I do?

A Talk to the worker’s supervisor. Write a letter to the District Administrator of DCF.

Q I have two children and I’m working without pay in the food stamp office. I only get $303 a month. Nobody can live on that. Who should I complain to?

A First, you should talk to your One Stop worker. His job is to get you into paid work. If he isn’t doing that, ask why. If you think his answer isn’t good, you can talk to his supervisor. Or you can ask Legal Aid to help you get the One Stop worker working for you.
Second, your Regional Workforce Board should know what is happening in the program. Write them a letter, or go to their monthly meeting. Let them know what’s happened to you in the welfare program.

Finally, the Florida Legislature decides how much money you and other welfare recipients get. You can let them know how it is to live on that much money.

Q I want to get job training. But my worker says the only training programs they have are for nail technicians and nursing home aides. I don’t want to do that kind of work. What can I do?

A Find out what other kind of training programs are in your community. If there is a program you want, tell your worker. If she says no, and you don’t agree or don’t understand why not, you can ask Legal Aid to help you get that training. Go to a Regional Workforce Board meeting and let them know you want more kinds of training for welfare recipients.

When you want to make government work better, it helps to have other people to work with. People all over Florida are trying to make welfare better. To find out if there’s someone near you working on this, call C.H.A.I.N. (Communication Health Action Information Network). You can reach them at the Human Services Coalition in Miami. Call 305 576 5001. Or send them an email: hsc@hscdade.org.
What Could Your Welfare Program Do?

Because the number of people getting welfare has fallen so fast, there is a lot of money available to do good things to help people get and keep jobs. But in the 1999 fiscal year, the local RWBs spent less than a fifth of the money they had. They had to send it back to the state because they couldn’t figure out how to use it.

Find out how much money your RWBs sent back to the State. Ask them what they’re planning to do next year. And give them some good ideas for what you’d like them to do in your community.

Here are just a few of the things RWBs can do. You probably have other good ideas. And if you know about something useful that they are doing in your community, would you please let us know?

1. Establish RITA accounts. (See p. 22).

2. Require the people who do their case management to hire plenty of case managers, so the workers have a small caseload and can really help people.

3. Organize a program to give used cars to welfare participants, and pay for insurance and registration.

4. Buy vans or buses. Train and hire welfare participants to drive them, to get children to day care and people to work.

6. Pay for people to go to college or vocational training longer than 12 months.

7. Send children to summer camp while their parents are working or going to school.

8. Create a summer jobs program for teenagers.
9. Provide intensive case management (workers with very low caseloads and special training) for participants with special needs.

10. Pay for special services for substance abusers or domestic violence victims. Pay for people to learn to read. Pay for people to learn English. Pay for people to get special training if they have learning disabilities. Where there are waiting lists for these services, your RWB can put money into expanding these programs.

11. Hire some people to be “ombudsmen” that anyone can call if they’re having a problem with the welfare program.

**Here are some things the state Legislature could do:**

1. Require Regional Workforce Boards to have people on them who are eligible for cash assistance.

2. Create a public jobs program: hire people to do what they now have to do for “community work experience.” Let people earn a paycheck instead of “volunteer” for monthly money from welfare. Programs like this are going on all over the country, including Miami, Florida.

3. Use welfare dollars to buy computers and Internet access for poor families.

**Notes:**
Legal Aid and Legal Services Programs

(This directory shows the programs that provide free legal services to low income people in each county. We've included the programs that don’t handle welfare issues, because you may have questions about other issues. If a certain person handles mostly welfare issues, or there is a special number to call, we have put that after the program information.)

Statewide Legal Services

Florida Legal Services
Director: Kent Spuhler
2121 Delta Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 92303
850-385-7900

This program works with the legal services programs in the counties to help low-income Floridians. They represent people who are referred through the county programs. But if you have a problem or question about welfare, and you can’t get help from the program in your county, you can call them for information. You can call them toll-free at 888-352-3570 and ask for Cindy Huddlestone.

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc.
1110-C NW 8th Ave.
Gainesville, FL 32601
352-955-2260

This program provides legal services to people in the Florida prison system. You can write them if you are a prisoner and have a legal problem.

Alachua

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Allison Thompson
111 SW First Street
Gainesville, FL 32601
352-372-0519
Ali Vasquez

Baker

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.
(see Duval)

Bay

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
Managing Attorney: Robert Daigle
204 E. 4th St.
Panama City, FL 32401
850-769-3581

Bradford

Three Rivers Legal Services
(see Alachua)
Brevard

Central Florida Legal Services
Managing Attorney: B.J. Owens
803 N. Fiske Blvd.
Cocoa, FL 32922-7323
407-636-3515

Brevard County Legal Aid
Director: Susan Christmas
1017 S. Florida Ave.
Rockledge, FL 32955
407-631-2500
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Broward

Legal Aid Services of Broward County, Inc.
Director: Anthony J. Karrat
609 SW First Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301
954-765-8950

Sharon Bourassa; Dyan Davis (call Dyan Davis 954-765-8957 ext 280)
2201 West Sample Rd., Bldg. 7, Ste. 5A
Pompano Beach, FL 33073
954-970-0155

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc (see Dade)

Calhoun

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. (see Gadsden)

Charlotte

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc. (see Lee)

Citrus

Withlacoochee Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Glenn Shuman
611 US Hwy. 41 S.
Inverness, FL 34450
352-726-8512

Clay

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.
Director: Michael Figgins
1107 Middleburg Ave.
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
904-284-8410

Collier

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
106 S. Second St.
P.O. Box 1109
Immokalee, FL 33934
941-657-3681

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center
1402 W. New Market Rd., Ste. B
Immokalee, FL 34142
941-657-7442

Collier County Voluntary Lawyers’ Project
Director: Judy Baker
Collier County Government Ctr., Bldg. L
3301 E. Tamiami Trail
Naples, FL 34112
941-775-8566
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Columbia

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
Managing Attorney: Donna McCray
2111 Sisters Welcome Rd.
P.O. Drawer 3067
Lake City, FL 32056-3067
904-752-5960
Shirley Rentz

Dade

Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.
Director: Marcia Cypen
3000 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 500
Miami, FL 33137
305-576-0080
Dawn Miller
South Dade Office
Directing Attorney: Mary Webster
16201 SW 95th Ave., Ste. 301
Miami, FL 33157
305-232-9680

Miami Beach Office
1424 Drexel Ave., Rm. 19
Miami Beach, FL 33139
305-672-2004

ACCIÓN Outreach Office
858 W. Flagler St.
Little Havana, FL 33135
305-545-9747

Joseph Caleb Center
5400 NW 22nd Ave., Ste 303
Miami, FL 33142
305-635-3130

Opa Locka Neighborhood Office
16405 NW 25th Ave.
Miami, FL 33054
305-620-6609

Blanche Morton City of Hialeah Office
300 E. 1st Ave., Rm. 109
Hialeah, FL 33010
305-884-1376

Overtown Neighborhood Office
1600 NW 3rd Ave.
Miami, FL 33136
305-576-0080 (for appointment)

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc.
Executive Director: Cheryl Little
3000 Biscayne Blvd., Ste. 400
Miami, FL 33137
305-573-1106
Brett Lassen
125 NE 8th Ave., Ste. 6
Homestead, FL 33030
305-245-0509

Cuban-American Bar Assoc. Pro Bono Project
3000 Biscayne Blvd., Ste. 400
Miami, FL 33137
305-573-1106
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Ass.
Director: Sharon L. Langer
123 NW First Ave.
Miami, FL 33128
305-579-5733
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Duval

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.
Director: Michael Figgins
126 W Adams St.
Jacksonville, FL 32202-4092
904-356-8371
Jane Hawkins, Michael Figgins

Escambia

Northwest Florida Legal Services
Director: C. V. Ford, Jr.
24 W. Government St.
P.O. Box 1551
Pensacola, FL 32597-1551
850-432-2336
Irene Macy

Flagler

Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.
(see Putnam)

Gadsden

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
Managing Attorney: Grant Dearborn
8 W. Jefferson St., Ste. 200
Quincy, FL 32351
850-875-9881

Gilchrist

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
(see Alachua)

Glades

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
(see Collier)
Gulf
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
(see Bay)

Hernando
Withlacoochee Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Glenn Shuman
51 W. Ft. Dade Ave.
Brooksville, FL 34601
352-796-7238

Highlands
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
(see Polk)

Hillsborough
Bay Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Richard C. Woltmann
829 W. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. 2nd Fl.
Tampa, FL 33603-3331
813-232-1343
Linda Breen. For intake call Mr. Garcia at
813-232-1343 ext 107
1001 E. Baker St., Ste. 200
Plant City, FL 33566-3746
18240 U.S. Highway 301 S.
813-752-1335
18240 US Hwy 301 S.
P.O. Box 249
Wimauma, FL 33598
813-634-4044

Holmes
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
(see Okaloosa)

Indian River
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
(see St. Lucie)

Jackson
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
(see Gadsden)

Jefferson
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
(see Leon)

Lafayette
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
(see Alachua)

Lake
Greater Orlando Area Legal Services
Director: Ralph Armstead
226 W. Main St.
Tavares, FL 32778
352-343-0815

Lee
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
Associate Director: Don Isaac
2254 McGregor Blvd. Plaza
P.O. Box 219
Ft. Myers, FL 33902-9205
941-334-4554
Lee County Legal Aid Society, Inc.
Director: J. Philip Short
P.O. Box 9205
Ft. Myers, FL 33902-9205
941-334-6118
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Leon
Legal Aid Foundation of the Tallahassee
Bar Association, Inc.
Director: Allen Tedder
301 S. Monroe St. Rm. 421
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-222-3004
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
Director: Kristine Knab
2119 Delta Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-385-9007
Scott Manion

Levy
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
(see Alachua)

Liberty
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
(See Gadsden)

Madison
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.
(see Columbia)

Manatee
Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.
Managing Attorney: Michael Stuckey
430 12th St., W.
P.O. Box 1373
Bradenton, FL 34205
941-746-6151

Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc.
Director: Nina Perry
1900 Main St., Ste. 302
Sarasota, FL 34236
941-366-0038

Marion
Withlacoochee Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Glenn Shuman
222 SW Broadway
Ocala, FL 34474
352-629-0105
Susan Creel, Suzanne Edmunds

Martin
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc. (See St. Lucie)

Monroe
Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.
Executive Director: Marcia K. Cypen
600 White St.
Key West, FL 33040
305-292-3566

Nassau
Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.
(see Duval)

Okaloosa
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.
Senior Attorney: Jeffery Toney
326-A Green Acres Rd.
Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32549
850-862-3279

Okaloosa County Legal Aid
Director: Deborah Suhre Angerman
Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex
Shalimar, FL 32579
850-651-7254
(Doesn’t handle welfare issues)

Okeechobee
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
(see St. Lucie)

Orange
Greater Orlando Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Ralph Armstead
1036 W. Amelia St.
Orlando, FL 32805
407-841-7777
Michelle Ku
Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association
Director: Mary Anne DePetrillo
100 E. Robinson St.
Orlando, FL 32801-1602
407-841-8310
Karrie Beebe

Osceola
Greater Orlando Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Ralph Armstead
800 N. Main St.
Kissimmee, FL 34744
407-847-0053

Palm Beach
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
Managing Attorney: Sally Schmidt
423 Fern St. Ste. 220
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
561-820-8902

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County
Director: Robert A. Bertisch
423 Fern St., Ste. 200
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
561-655-8944
(Don’t handle welfare issues)

Pasco
Bay Area Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Richard C. Woltmann
37718 Meridian
Dade City, FL 33525
352-567-9044
8406 Massachusetts Ave., Ste. B-2
New Port Richey, FL 34653-3100
727-847-5494

Pinellas
Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.
Director: John P. Cunningham
641 First St., S.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727-821-0726
Pam Weiner, Mishell Brown
314 S. Missouri Ave., Ste. 109
Clearwater, FL 33756
727-443-0657

Clearwater Bar Foundation
Pro Bono Coordinator: Jefferson H. Taylor
314 S. Missouri Ave., Ste. 107
Clearwater, FL 34616-5858
727-461-5450

Community Law Program, Inc.
Executive Director: Kelly Rauch
3420 8th Ave., S., Rm. 109
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
727-323-7712

Polk
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
Director: Peter Helwig
963 E. Memorial Blvd.
Lakeland, FL 33802-4688
941-688-7376

Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society, Inc.
Director: Linda Moore
501 South Broadway Ave Suite 2
Bartow, FL 33830
863-519-5663
Gina Robinson, 863-519-5663 ext 106

Putnam
Central Florida Legal Services
Managing Attorney: Catherine A. Altman
216 South 6th Street
Palatka, FL 32177-4608
904 328 8361
Megan Wall
St. Johns
Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
*(see Putnam)*

St. Lucie
Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.  
Managing Attorney: Raul Pardo  
200 S. Indian River Dr. Ste. 101  
P.O. Box 4333  
Ft. Pierce, FL 31948-4333  
561-466-4766  
Dervette Green
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center  
131B N. Second St.  
Ft. Pierce, FL 34950  
561-489-4660

Santa Rosa
Northwest Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Director: C.V. Ford, Jr.  
6856 Caroline St., Ste. 105 & 107  
Milton, FL 32507  
850-626-2188

Sarasota
Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc.  
1750 17th St., Unit 1  
Sarasota, FL 34234  
941-366-1746

Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc.  
Director: Nina Perry  
1900 Main St., Ste. 302  
Sarasota, FL 34236  
941-336-0038

Seminole
Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Managing Attorney: Treena Kaye  
315 Magnolia Ave.  
Sanford, FL 32771-1915  
407-322-8983  
Bruce Scott

Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society  
Director: Silvia McLain  
115 Boston Ave., Ste. 100  
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701  
407-834-1660

Sumter
Withlacoochee Area Legal Services, Inc.  
*(see Citrus)*

Suwannee
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.  
*(see Columbia)*

Taylor
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.  
*(see Columbia)*

Union
Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.  
*(see Alachua)*

Volusia
Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Director: Bill Abbuehl  
128-A Orange Ave.  
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-4310  
904-255-6573  
Martha Guillan

Wakulla
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.  
*(see Leon)*

Walton
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.  
*(see Okaloosa)*

Washington
Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.  
*(See Bay)*
Florida Legislators

Alachua

Senate:
Betty Holzendorf
816 N. Ocean St.
Jacksonville  32202-3083
(904) 359-6880
Assistants: Ken Johnson, Milessa Nesbitt, Geraldine C. Orr

Richard Mitchell
406 10th Ave. NW
Jasper  32052
(904) 719-2733
Assistants: Kym Galliah, Dean Papapetrou, Anjanette Radney, Pam Clemmons

Rod Smith
2727 NW 43rd St., Suite 2A
Gainesville  32606
(352) 375-3555
Assistants: Tonya Shays, Pat Shays, Mike Murtha, Nancy Williams

House:
Will S. Kendrick
212 Capitol
Tallahassee  32399-1300
(850) 488-7870
Assistant: Laura Jersey

Perry McGriff
1120 NW 13th St.
Gainesville  32601-4136
(352) 372-8406
Assistant: Tammy Salmon

Ed Jennings, Jr.
4707 NW 53rd Ave., Suite A
Gainesville  32606-3400
(352) 377-0022

Baker

Senate:
Richard Mitchell
406 10th Ave. NW
Jasper  32052
(904) 719-2733
Assistants: Kym Galliah, Dean Papapetrou, Anjanette Radney, Pam Clemmons

House:
Aaron Bean
305 Bonnieview Rd
Fernandina Beach  32034-8614
(904) 277-3493

Bay

Senate:
Durell Peaden
598 North Ferdon Blvd.
Crestview  32536-2753
(850) 689-0556
Assistants: Roger Robinson, Susan Levine, Ann McGraw, James Snyder

Alfred Lawson
400 North Adams St.
Tallahassee  32301
(850) 222-1286
Assistants: Melissa Durham, Berta Kemp, Deborah Fairhurst

Charlie Clary
1241 Airport Rd., Suite A
Destin  32541
(850) 833-9159
Assistants: Peggy Hicks, Buckley Vernon, Allison Pursley, Stacey Allen

House:
Allan Bense
PO Box 2345
Panama City  32401-2345
(850) 488-9696
Assistants: David Coley, Sharron Brown
Bev Kilmer  
PO Box 1586  
Marianna  32447-5586  
(850) 718-0047  
Assistants: Debbie Dennis, Joyce Watters, Chris Akins

Bradford  
Senate:  
Richard Mitchell  
406 10th Ave. NW  
Jasper  32052  
(904) 719-2733  
Assistants: Kym Galliah, Dean Papapetrou, Anjanette Radney, Pam Clemmons

Rod Smith  
2727 NW 43rd St., Suite 2A  
Gainesville  32606  
(352) 375-3555  
Assistants: Tonya Shays, Pat Shays, Mike Murtha, Nancy Williams

House:  
Aaron Bean  
305 Bonnieview Rd  
Fernandina Beach  32034-8614  
(904) 277-3493

Brevard  
Senate:  
Bill Posey  
1802 S. Fiske Blvd., Suite 108  
Rockledge  32955-3007  
(321) 690-3484  
Assistants: Patrick Gavin, William DuPree, Russell Cyphers

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www.bigbend-workforce.org
A useful source for welfare transition and cash assistance policies is the website www.wages.org.

Click Professionals and Partners
Click Welfare Transition Reference Guide and
Welfare Policies and Procedures

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The main sources for these rules are Florida statutes and the Florida Administrative Code. I have provided the statutory cite for the major topics, as well as some sub-topics that are buried in the statute and may be hard to find.

In the 2000 legislative session, much of the law was revised and renumbered, and authority for administering the assistance programs transferred. Rules and policies will have to be reissued. A June 30, 2000 memo from Workforce Florida, Inc. (replaces State WAGES Board) says that all rules, policies, directives, instructions issued by the WAGES Board or jointly by The Board and DCF remain in effect until further notice, except those governing learnfare (which the 2000 bill eliminated.) Where the statutory provisions have not been significantly changed, I have retained cites to the Florida Administrative Code.

4. The relationship has to be by the fifth degree or less. HRSM 1435.05.00 (This is the public assistance manual.) You calculate this by counting the links up to the common ancestor from the person (the child or the caretaker relative) who is farthest from the common ancestor. Example: my cousin’s great-grandchild is related to me by the fifth degree. (Our common ancestor is our grandmother. The count goes: My grandma - My aunt - My cousin - Cousin’s child - Cousin’s grandchild - Cousin’s great-grandchild.) Blackstone, William. Commentaries on the Laws of England Vol 2, p 203 University of Chicago Press facsimile edition. (1979)


25. HRSM 165-22 Sec 2415.2105 (this is the public assistance manual)


27. Except as noted in the text, income and resource criteria for these diversion programs appear to be governed by Sec. 445.020 (2000). Federal law requires TANF moneys to be spent only on the needy. Needy is defined in the State Plan as 200% of poverty. State Plan for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Oct 1999, p 11.

28. Sec. 445.021 Fla. Stat. (2000); 65A-4.100 Fla. Admin. Code (revised 4/00) (The new statute deletes the requirement that the Department create rules for this provision and instead requires that Workforce Florida Inc. develop criteria.)


30. This limitation is in the rule, not the statute.

31. This program should be available to families defined as needy under the state plan: those who have income below 200% of the federal poverty level. See n. 27.


40. Sec. 445.023 Fla. Stat.(2000); 42 USC 608(a)(7)
48. 42 USC 1396r-6(a)(b); IPM section 2030; Sec 445.029 Fla. Stat.(2000)
49. 42 USC 1396u-1(c); IPM section 2030
50. 42 USC 1396u-1
51. 42 CFR 433.147 and 433.148
59. The 2000 Legislature added the phrase “unless otherwise provided by law” to the lifetime limit of 48 months. Sec. 414.105 Fla. Stat. (2000). This seems to refer to the hardship exemptions granted under 414.105(4). It could also refer to the extension available to the SSI/SSDI disability applicant, and the 12 month extension when someone is employed. It doesn’t seem to apply for the 12 months extension for mental health/substance abuse treatment, which specifically limits that extension to once within 48 months. All the extensions and exemptions are probably subject to the 20% cap. This will perhaps be clarified in the future by departmental rules and policies.
60. Sec 414.105(4)(a) and (b) Fla Stat (2000); 65A-4.201(4) and (5) Fla Admin Code (revised 4/00).
61. Sec 414.105(4)(c) Fla Stat (2000); 65A-4.201(6) Fla Admin Code (revised 4/00)
64. Sec 414.105 (6) and (13) Fla Stat (2000); 65A-4.201(revised 4/00)
66. Sec. 445.024(2) Fla. Stat. (2000); 45 CFR Sec. 261.31 and 261.32 (1999). (45 CFR Sec 261.32(d)(1) has not been applied.) The participant may be required, in addition to work activity, to get literacy training to improve employability. The combined time in these activities cannot be more than 40 hours a week.

67. Sec. 414.065(4)(e) Fla. Stat. (2000) This is in the sanctions portion of the statute, but refers to exempting people from 5 hours a week of the work requirement.


75. 65A-4.206 Fla. Admin. Code (new 4/00)

76. 65A-4.203 Fla. Admin. Code (revised 4/00)

77. Sec. 414.0655 Fla. Stat. (1999) This is described as an exemption which continues while you are in the residential program.

78. 7 CFR Sec. 273.7 (1/1/00 edition); see also Transmittal P99-11-0046 from Economic Self-Sufficiency Services at Dept of Children and Families, dated 11/12/99. This covers both the pre-sanction counseling requirement and the food stamp sanctions. It's available at the Reference Guide described in the introduction to these endnotes.

79. 7 CFR Sec. 273.7 and 273.5 (1/1/00). The policy in the DCF Transmittal (see n78) regarding part time college students appears to be less restrictive than the CFR regulations.

80. WAGES State Board Annual Report FY 98-99 Coalition 23 - p 24

81. Described in Center for Law and Social Policy CLASP Update April 2000

82. Ibid