



**WELFARE PEER TA NETWORK**  
**Developing Strategies to Address the Child-Only Caseload**  
*Short Report*



Under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, child-only cases—those in which no adult is included in the cash grant—have become an increasing proportion of State TANF caseloads in recent years. Child-only cases are either parental or non-parental. Parental cases are those in which the parent is resident in the home, but ineligible for TANF receipt for such reasons as time limits,<sup>1</sup> sanction, alien status, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) receipt, or previous drug felony conviction. Non-parental cases are those in which neither biological parent is present, and another adult, usually a relative, is the primary caregiver. Research indicates that the percentage of child-only cases relative to overall national caseloads increased 200 percent in one decade—from 12 percent in 1990 to nearly 35 percent by 2000.<sup>2</sup> In some States, over fifty percent of their FY2002 caseloads were child-only.<sup>3</sup> More caseload trends are depicted in Table 1, below:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Total TANF Families</i>	<i>Total Child-Only Families</i>	<i>Percentage Child-Only Families</i>
1990	3,976,000	459,000	11.6
1992	4,769,000	707,000	14.8
1994	5,046,000	869,000	17.2
1996	4,553,000	978,000	21.5
1998	3,176,000	743,000	23.4
1999	2,648,000	770,000	29.1
2000	2,269,000	782,000	34.5

In addition to the variability in the proportion of a State’s total caseload accounted for by child-only cases, the existing research indicates that the composition of the child-only caseload across the States varies as well. In some States, for example, there is a significantly higher

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<sup>1</sup> Child-only cases are not subject to such requirements as work participation or time limits. Thus, while parents “time out” of eligibility, children remain eligible, barring full-family sanction policy.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients*. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/particip/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> These States include Alabama, Florida, Idaho, North Carolina, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

proportion of relative (non-parental) cases, while in others, SSI, immigrant, and sanctioned or time-limited parental cases are more common.

In response to these trends, the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network conducted discussion with State TANF administrators around the country to assess their current policies and programs designed to meet the needs of the child-only caseload, and to gauge their level of interest in participating a Roundtable on this topic. The responses were overwhelming – we gathered significant information on the current child-only environment, and more than thirty States expressed an interest in the Roundtable concept. The first of these Roundtables entitled *Developing Strategies to Address the Child-Only Caseload* was held April 8-9, 2003 in Colorado Springs (El Paso County), Colorado.<sup>4</sup>

Roundtable participants heard presentations from El Paso County, Colorado, and the States of Washington and New Jersey about innovative practices in those locations. New Jersey then joined South Carolina in a discussion about findings from research and evaluation efforts underway in their home States. Thanks to the hospitality of the El Paso County Department of Human Services, Roundtable participants were able to speak with program supervisors, staff, and customers of the child-only services. They were also exposed, via site tours, to the everyday operations of El Paso County's Family Support Team.

The full report, available in late April, will fully describe the meeting, attended by California, Colorado, Hawaii, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, and will include important highlights and lessons learned.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time publication, the second Roundtable has been tentatively scheduled for June 3-4, 2003 in Trenton, New Jersey.