

## What You Can Do To Support Welfare Rights:

- ◆ Call or write your legislators to change welfare laws and unfreeze existing resources
- ◆ Contact your local Welfare Rights Organization
- ◆ Volunteer at a local food bank or homeless shelter
- ◆ Help others become informed
- ◆ Volunteer at the next simulation
- ◆ Have your group sponsor a simulation

## Additional Resources on Welfare Issues:

Michigan League for Human Services  
1111 S. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 202  
Lansing, MI 48912-1658

Book: "It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty" by Rebecca Blank, Dean of the University of Michigan School of Public Policy. Princeton University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-691-00401-3

"Is It Reform?: Report of the Welfare and Human Rights Monitoring Project" – National Report 1998-99. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, 130 Prospect Street, Cambridge, MA 02139-1845. (617) 868-6600

Book: "Hands to Work: The Stories of Three Families Racing the Welfare Clock" by LynNell Hancock, 308 pp., publ. by William Morrow, 2002. (New York City setting)

Book: "American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare" by Jason DeParle, 408 pp., publ. by Viking, 2004 (Milwaukee setting)

Book: "Nickel and Dime on (Not) Getting by in America" by Barbara Ehrenreich, publ. by Owl Books, 2001



The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ) puts on the Welfare Simulation in partnership with the local Welfare Rights Organization. Community resource volunteers include members of the Welfare Rights Organization who have directly experienced the welfare system. The director of each simulation is from the Welfare Rights Organization. ICPJ has also updated the simulation to reflect current welfare policies in Michigan. The standard cost for the simulation is \$700. That fee is negotiable. Again, a minimum of 35 people is needed for the simulation.

*For more information in Southeast Michigan contact:*

**Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice**  
**730 Tappan**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48104**

**Telephone: (734) 663-1870**

**E-mail: [info@icpj.net](mailto:info@icpj.net)**

or

**Welfare Rights Organization**  
**E-mail: [karenschaumann@yahoo.com](mailto:karenschaumann@yahoo.com)**

This simulation was originally created & copyright by Reform of Welfare Education Association (ROWEL),  
St. Louis, MO

## Could You Live on Welfare for A Month?



**Poor People on the Shore by Pablo Picasso (1903)**

## Find Out Through A Welfare Simulation

A Welfare Simulation is a three-hour "hands-on," active learning experience about what it means to live for a month on welfare.

## What is a Welfare Simulation?

A Welfare Simulation is a three-hour program of experiential learning in which participants are sensitized to the realities of life in poverty. It is a copyrighted learning tool created and presented by ROWEL since the late 1970's.

In a Welfare Simulation, 35-75 participants use the support of scripted role assignments and structured situations that enable the participants to deal with specific challenges that low-income citizens from various kinds of families may face. Each family is given information about itself. Some are newly unemployed or deserted by the "breadwinner," while others receive TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families), either with or without additional earned income. Still others receive disability income. Some are elderly.

Volunteers create a village of stores and agencies with which the families will interact for four 15-minute weeks. Resources include welfare office workers, grocers, pawnbrokers, food pantry personnel, bill collectors, police, employment interviewers, and others.

After the "month on welfare", a facilitator leads a discussion based on the family experiences in the simulation. The community resources share their insights, and the facilitator invites participants to become active regarding the issues affecting the lives of those living with low incomes.

The standard cost for the simulation is \$700. This fee is somewhat negotiable.

## What You Can Expect

### To Learn How Hard It Is on Welfare To...

- ◆ Feed your family
- ◆ Pay your bills
- ◆ Find employment
- ◆ Find childcare
- ◆ Satisfy welfare demands
- ◆ Keep your kids out of trouble
- ◆ Make quality family time

### To See the World Through the Eyes Of...

- ◆ A recently unemployed, middle-income family
- ◆ A single mother recently abandoned with kids
- ◆ An elderly couple on SSI with medical concerns
- ◆ A single mother with kids on cash assistance
- ◆ Or, a shut-in elderly widow

### What it is Like on Welfare to Work With...

- ◆ A Bank
- ◆ A Landlord's Office
- ◆ A Food Bank
- ◆ A Quick Cash Store
- ◆ A Utilities Payment Office
- ◆ A Pawnbroker
- ◆ The Police Station
- ◆ An Employer
- ◆ A Welfare Office
- ◆ A Childcare Provider
- ◆ A Welfare Rights Office (optional)
- ◆ Legal Services (optional)
- ◆ An Employment Officer

## Comments From Past Participants

"[I learned] how real it was—even the lines weren't organized!"  
---*Social Work Student*

"It dramatized the hopelessness and helplessness of being trapped in welfare."  
---*Social Work Student*

"[I learned] how hard it is just to survive and not know exactly what rights are out there."  
---*Early Head Start Teacher*

"...It makes me want to learn more and do something."  
---*Undergraduate Student*

"I think the general public needs to be aware of how the system operates and what people have to deal with."  
---*Government Agency Staff Member*

