

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Jim Hadden 609-777-2600

RELEASE: December 17, 1999

GOVERNOR'S WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS DISCUSSES THE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES DEPENDENT ON WELFARE

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

In this week's address, Gov. Whitman talks about the significant reduction in the number of families who are dependent on welfare in New Jersey. The number of families dependent on welfare, which was more than 117,000 when the Governor took office in 1994, has been reduced by half over the course of her administration.

A copy of the text of the message is attached.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

The address is also available on our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/radio2.html>.

Radio Message for December 17 Welfare Reductions

Hello, this is Governor Christie Whitman.

I often refer to the State of New Jersey as many faces, but one family. We all want the many faces in our one family to enjoy a good, healthy, happy, and fulfilling life. We want to see all our citizens reach their tremendous potential.

That's why I am so pleased to announce that the number of families dependent on welfare, which was more than 117,000 when I took office in 1994, has been reduced by half over the course of my administration.

Tens of thousands of families have made the transition from welfare to work and begun building a brighter future for themselves and their children. That's the most significant caseload reduction in New Jersey history.

What's more, a study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research showed that the average monthly income of those families who remained on welfare is about \$800 as compared to nearly \$1,600 for those who left welfare for work.

While those statistics are impressive, it isn't about numbers - it's about people.

It's about a single mother who can afford to better care for her family. It's about the man who is meeting his child support obligations so that his children can have a better quality of life. It's about the feeling that comes with taking pride in what you do and the self-respect that develops from economic independence.

While our state's strong economy has created more opportunities for welfare recipients to get back on their feet, I'm proud that our Work First New Jersey program has been there to help people take their first steps toward independence.

Work First New Jersey has stressed work as a means to independence. Work First helps end welfare dependency by limiting welfare assistance to five years while offering individuals the tools they need to find a job.

What's more, our program will help collect child support payments for families caring for dependent children and will offer assistance with health care, childcare, transportation, and other support services.

Since Work First began in 1997, the welfare caseload has dropped from 96,000 to 52,000. It means that our program helped these families develop the skills to leave welfare and take the first steps toward making it on their own.

That's a great achievement for our program. It's a tremendous accomplishment for all those who found work. And it's a boon to our Work First Corporate Partners as well as the hundreds of other employers who have hired Work First participants.

Making the transition to work is the first step, but it's not always an easy one. That's why we want to work hard to ensure that families who have left welfare are taking advantage of other available programs, like Food Stamps and Medicaid, which can make that transition easier.

Reducing the welfare rolls by half in only six years is a tremendous achievement. It's something of which all the hardworking members of our New Jersey family can be proud.

While I'm proud of that accomplishment, I promise to continue looking for ways to help those dependent on welfare to begin building a brighter future for themselves and their children.

That will make our state an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

