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NEWS RELEASE

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Statement of NJ Gov. Christie Whitman Regarding the Family Cap and Personal Responsibility; Cites Studies by Rutgers and Columbia

The following is a statement from NJ Gov. Christie Whitman regarding the family cap, the Rutgers University research released today and the findings of the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University:

"The Rutgers and Columbia studies address two important factors we should consider when reviewing the family cap in New Jersey. The Rutgers data indicate that while there are always fluctuations in the rate of abortions among welfare clients, the rate at the conclusion of their study was at about the same level as it was before the family cap was imposed. The Columbia study indicates that New Jersey is one of only two states where the rate of children living in poverty has actually dropped, and dropped by 26 percent.

"The Rutgers University research released today shows that the message of personal responsibility is working. Participation in responsible family planning has increased and the decrease in birth rates demonstrates that many welfare mothers have appropriately made the choice to not to have additional children while on welfare because of their financial condition.

"The understanding that all of our choices have consequences is as fundamental to welfare reform as it is to life. The data suggest that welfare mothers are recognizing this fact and are making the exact same decision that many working families make when they decide to postpone or refrain from having additional children because of their financial situation.

"Part of the success attributable to New Jersey's welfare reform and Medicaid programs has been the result of our education efforts that encourage effective family planning methods as the best alternative to unwanted pregnancies, to abortions and to growth in the ranks of children living in poverty. These educational programs are essential to our commitment to prevent unwanted pregnancies and abortions and I have asked Commissioner Guhl to further enhance those efforts.

"Keeping children out of poverty is a goal we all share, and a recent Columbia University study indicates that New Jersey has had remarkable success in reducing its young child poverty rate. In fact, while the rest of the country saw a 12 percent increase in child poverty, New Jersey experienced a 26 percent decline in our own child poverty rate. It is my intention to build upon our record," she said.

The Rutgers University data indicate that the abortion rate among welfare recipients both during the year before the cap went into effect and at the conclusion of the research averaged about 28 abortions per 1,000 female clients.

The Rutgers study included a survey of 1,236 women receiving welfare and found that:

- 81.6 percent agreed that the family cap encourages people to take responsibility for their actions;
- 71.5 percent felt that the family cap rule helps keep women focused on job training and career, and
- 69.8 percent felt that the family cap rule stresses the financial responsibility of having children.

According to research compiled by Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty, New Jersey has experienced a 26 percent decrease in the number of young children living in poverty. New Jersey's success is dramatically different than the national experience where the Center found the number of children living in poverty actually grew by 12 percent.

In addition to calculating a national rate, the study also looked at the child poverty rate in 10 states. Vermont was the only other state in the nation where a decline in the child poverty rate was recorded.

The Columbia study was reported in the Summer/Fall edition of News and Issues published by the National Center for Children in Poverty at the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York.

A copy of the summary from [News and Issues](#) (PDF 129K) is attached.