

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Governor's Weekly Radio Message: New Jersey Welfare Reform Encourages Self-Reliance and Personal Responsibility**

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

This week the Governor discusses New Jersey's success in encouraging self-reliance and personal responsibility. According to two recent studies, the state's welfare reform and family cap provision are working. New Jersey's welfare rolls have decreased 35 percent since Gov. Whitman took office. The family cap policy, which denies additional money to women who have more children while on welfare, is encouraging greater personal responsibility and promoting responsible family planning. The data suggests that welfare mothers recognize that their choices have consequences and are postponing having additional children until their financial situation improves.

Attached is the text of the message.

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.

#### **Governor's Weekly Radio message November 6, 1998 Family Cap and Personal Responsibility**

We all know that a sense of personal responsibility acts as a guiding principle in our lives. And in light of two recently released studies, we also know that New Jersey's family cap policies and welfare reform measures are among the most effective in the nation in helping people take responsibility for their own lives.

Increasing peoples' self-reliance has been an important part of our welfare reform. And we are already seeing the results. Since I took office, our welfare rolls have dropped by 35 percent -- bringing the caseload to its lowest level in more than 25 years.

Our welfare reform measures, combined with our robust economy, are providing a paycheck for thousands of former welfare recipients. In fact, between 1,200 and 1,800 families per month are leaving welfare because they've found a job. That's good news for New Jersey's families - especially our children.

Here's more good news, our family cap policy, which denies additional money to women who have more children while on welfare, is encouraging greater personal responsibility and promoting responsible family planning.

New Jersey's message of personal responsibility is working. Participation in responsible family planning has increased, and the decrease in birth rates demonstrates that many welfare mothers are taking personal responsibility for their choices and refraining from having additional children until their financial condition improves.

Understanding that all of our choices have consequences is as fundamental to welfare reform as it is to life.

The data suggests that welfare mothers are recognizing this fact and are making the same decision that many working families make when they decide to postpone having additional children until they can afford to.

A Rutgers University survey of over 1,200 women receiving welfare found that:

81.6 percent agreed that the family cap encourages people to take personal 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.

Part of the success of New Jersey's welfare reform and Medicaid programs is due to our educational efforts that encourage effective family planning methods as the best alternative to unwanted pregnancies.

In further encouraging news, the Rutgers University study indicates that while there are always fluctuations in the rate of abortions among welfare clients, the rate at the conclusion of the study was at about the same level as it was before the family cap was imposed.

Our welfare reform measures are working and moving people from welfare and into good jobs. Our family cap is encouraging personal responsibility without increasing the abortion rate. And the number of young children living in poverty has decreased by 26 percent.

Children are life's greatest blessings. Here in New Jersey, we are helping families improve their financial condition and helping all our children have the quality of life they deserve.