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MEDIA ADVISORY**Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses the Success of Work First
New Jersey**

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 her message today, the Governor discusses New Jersey's Work First Program. This week marks the first anniversary of the welfare reform program that limits able-bodied recipients to a lifetime total of 60 months benefits. The program also mandates that recipients follow tough work requirements and cooperate in making child support payments. The number of families on welfare has dropped from 130,000 to 85,000. Gov. Whitman said that Work First is transforming dependent welfare clients into productive, enthusiastic, taxpaying citizens.

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
April 2, 1998**

A year ago this week, a clock started to tick in the State of New Jersey. Last April, able-bodied welfare recipients in our state learned that they would now have a lifetime total of 60 months of welfare benefits.

They were also told they would have to earn those benefits. They'd have to follow tough work requirements, cooperate with our efforts to collect child support, and live with a responsible adult if they were under 18.

These rules formed the core of a welfare reform program we named Work First. A year later, I'm proud to say, Work First is working. It's transforming welfare from a permanent way of life into a comprehensive but temporary support for those who are out of work.

Listen to a note I got from a caseworker just a few months after the program started. He wrote, "I am seeing more of my clients going to work than I have ever seen in the past. In addition, it seems that the clients who truly do not need the assistance are requesting that their cases be closed."

The statistics support that caseworker's experience. Already more than half of all welfare recipients are in some work activity - four years ahead of schedule. In several counties, in fact, 100 percent of able-bodied recipients are in a training program or work activity.

That work experience, we believe, will lead to permanent jobs, enabling them to leave the welfare system forever.

Here's more good news. Because of Work First and a strong economy, we've seen the number of families on welfare drop from 130,000 to 85,000.

That's a dramatic decrease. And I'm convinced that as Work First really hits its stride - as we reinvest the savings in helping recipients become truly self-sufficient - we'll enjoy an even steeper decline.

This year alone, we're reinvesting another \$100 million in child care, drug abuse treatment, training, and special services for those hardest to reach. That money will help more recipients be ready for jobs, earn jobs, and then keep those jobs.

We are also making great progress with our corporate partners program, in which employers step up to recruit Work First participants. We started with about a dozen companies last year, and now we have 500 Work First New Jersey corporate partners seeking new hires.

Work First is turning New Jersey into a true leader in welfare reform. More important, Work First is transforming dependent welfare clients into productive, enthusiastic, and I should add tax-paying citizens.

Several months ago, when I was at a public event, a woman walking by stopped, came up to me, and hugged me. She smiled as she walked away and said, "I'm in Work First, and I'm on my way to my job!"

I didn't get the name, but I got the message. Work First is working here in New Jersey.

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