



A CJC Policy Paper

**Recommendations for a New Temporary Assistance for
Needy Families (TANF) Program
In Illinois**

December 2002

Acknowledgments

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Recommendations for a New Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program In Illinois

Despite a decade of stunning economic growth, census data confirm what food pantry workers, human services providers, and advocates for the poor have keenly understood: many people are being left behind. In Illinois, the poverty rate has begun to rise. Nearly 1.3 million individuals and 244,000 families live below the poverty level. Five hundred and thirty-six thousand families earn just \$25,000 or less.¹ The celebrated, drastic, decline in the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload translates to numbers far less palatable. Seventy-six percent of families leaving welfare in the past three years still live in poverty.² The most recent report of the Illinois Families Study also reflects a significant increase in the population of former welfare recipients not working and not on TANF (27% total).³

Illinois needs a clear commitment and strong leadership to make poverty reduction, not caseload reduction, the primary purpose of its welfare program. To this end, changes can, and must, be made at the state level that signal a shift in both the state's commitment to its most vulnerable residents and to the development of its workforce. An effective TANF program meets the individualized needs of low-income families while investing in their future success through opportunities for education, training and work supports that prepare them to play a role as members of the state's workforce.

The Chicago Jobs Council has prepared this “tool” to guide our Governor-Elect, transition team members, legislators, and a new Department of Human Services administration in the transformation of the TANF program in Illinois. The tool articulates six goals with specific recommendations to develop a TANF program focused on poverty reduction and workforce development that will benefit both low-income families as well as employers and the Illinois economy. It also identifies actions required to achieve each recommendation to help prioritize work for a short-term and long-term plan. Actions include: 1) implement current policy, where proper implementation is lacking, 2) sub-regulatory change, 3) regulatory change, and 4) legislative change. The “action required” is not always the only action possible, but is the fastest way to improve the situation for families in need. Some recommendations include more than one action, as noted by an asterisk, to achieve both immediate and longer-term change. A single asterisk (*) indicates the immediate action should be proper implementation but regulatory and/or legislative changes should be considered for positive, lasting improvements. Similarly, a double-asterisk (**) indicates the immediate action required may be sub-regulatory or regulatory change, but legislative changes should be considered for positive, lasting improvements.

Many of these improvements can be made at no cost to the state. These changes establish a program philosophy of providing opportunities and support to families as they move toward self-sufficiency. Others require minimal investment of both state and federal TANF/Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds and other federal dollars, and will strengthen program and family outcomes. Some changes will require a significant investment of resources, but will realize extensive, long-term gains.

¹ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

² Lewis, D. et al. 2002. “Welfare Reform in Illinois: Is the moderate approach working?”, University Consortium on Welfare Reform.

³ Ibid.

Recommendations for a New TANF Program In Illinois

Goal I: Preserve and improve the safety net for both working and non-working individuals and families facing employment barriers.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
1. Reinstate entitlement to benefits.	Legislative 305ILCS5/4-1	Several states have constitutional amendments ensuring a safety net for their residents in need. Illinois' poor families must be assured their government will assist them in times of crisis, incapacity, or unemployment.
2. Keep, improve, and expand exemptions from the 60-month time limit by:	Implement current policy	Improving the assessment process will ensure that people who qualify for exemptions receive them.
a) stopping the TANF clock for families complying with their Responsibility and Services Plan (RSP).	Regulatory**	Low-income families in compliance with poverty reduction/workforce development goals should not be hindered by arbitrary time limits.
b) stopping the TANF clock for families who are homeless.	Regulatory**	Use the US Department of Education's definition of homeless (42 USCS 11434a).
c) stopping the TANF clock for teen parents up to the age of 21 who are completing their education.	Regulatory**	Currently, the TANF time clock starts at age 18. Because full-time work stops the clock but anything lower than post-secondary education does not, there is an incentive for teens to drop out for low-wage work rather than stay in school once they turn 18. Teen parents should be encouraged to complete their education to reach long-term self-sufficiency.
d) stopping the TANF clock for families exempted from work requirements.	Regulatory**	When a family's circumstances exempt or prevent them from participating in self-sufficiency activities their time clock should also be stopped. These special circumstances require additional time to address and overcome them before the family can take steps toward self-sufficiency.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<p>3. Keep, improve, and expand the Family Violence Option (FVO) starting by:</p> <p>a) expanding the FVO to include victims of sexual violence.</p> <p>b) adopting provisions of the federal law which allow Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence (DV/SV) survivors exemptions for any TANF program requirements, as necessary.</p> <p>c) implementing universal notification of DV/SV services and exemptions.</p> <p>d) providing screening at all local offices by trained DV/SV advocates.</p> <p>e) screening for DV/SV prior to case sanction or termination.</p>	<p>Implement current policy*</p> <p>Regulatory**</p> <p>Regulatory**</p> <p>Sub-regulatory**</p> <p>Sub-regulatory**</p> <p>Sub-regulatory**</p>	<p>Current policy is not being properly implemented and the scope of current regulations is much narrower than federal law allows.</p> <p>Other states (e.g. Kansas) have done so.</p> <p>Improving the assessment process will ensure that people who qualify for exemptions receive them.</p>
<p>4. Eliminate the ban on ex-offenders.</p>	<p>Legislative 305ILCS 5/1-10</p>	<p>Low-income parents who have served their time require assistance that facilitates their stability and family reunification.</p>
<p>5. Eliminate the ban on immigrants.</p>	<p>Legislative 305ILCS 5/1-11</p>	<p>Legal immigrants in Illinois must have the same access to public benefits as citizens. Many contribute their labor and taxes to our state's economy.</p>
<p>6. End diversion of applicants.</p>	<p>Implement current policy*</p>	<p>Diversion of eligible applicants, or turning applicants away before their eligibility for public benefits can be assessed, has become unofficial local office policy to meet caseload reduction goals. As a result, families who are eligible and in need of IDHS assistance do not receive it, creating a significant barrier to their self-sufficiency. Teen parents are particularly vulnerable to this practice.</p>

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
7. Provide outreach to families whose income makes them eligible for benefits administered by the state (see also Goal 4.5).	Implement current policy	Many families are unaware of, and therefore do not take advantage of, their eligibility for various public assistance programs. These programs serve as critical work supports for hard-working low-income families.
8. Eliminate the family cap.	Sub-regulatory Legislative 305ILCS 5/4-2(f)	Illinois' family cap prohibits the receipt of cash assistance for any child born after 1996 into a family already receiving TANF unless they have not received cash assistance for 9 full months. The current statute allows for voucher payments to capped families, which the Illinois Department of Human Services has refused to do. Vouchers should be implemented immediately. Legislative changes are necessary to eliminate the harmful family cap altogether.
9. Increase cash grant levels to recover the loss in value of the grant due to inflation since 1990 and preserve their value with an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).	Legislative	Building in a COLA has been done with other government-administered benefits, e.g. Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
10. Stipulate that participation in any marriage promotion or family formation program or activity is voluntary and that nonparticipation will not affect any individual's or family's eligibility for, or receipt of, assistance or services in any needs-based program.	Regulatory/ Legislative	This will ensure that the lowest income families in Illinois will receive the supports they need without deterrence.
11. Eliminate full family sanctions.	Regulatory**	Families are put at great health risk when full sanctions are levied upon the entire household.
12. Require an assessment of family circumstances before sanction or termination.	Sub-regulatory**	Family circumstances may demonstrate good cause for non-compliance with TANF requirements. An assessment of each case prior to sanction or termination would ensure that proper procedures have been followed and that appropriate action is taken.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<p>13. Improve the crisis assistance program for individuals and families to remedy temporary financial strains that could result in job loss by:</p> <p>a) informing all low-income families and individuals about crisis assistance availability.</p> <p>b) expediting application approvals.</p>	<p>Implement current policy*</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p>	<p>Current statute allows for a more expanded use of the program than regulations allow.</p>
<p>14. Enhance the child support enforcement program by:</p> <p>a) “passing through” the full child support payment to the custodial parent.</p> <p>b) disregarding the child support payment as income when calculating income for applicants/recipients at, or below, 200% of poverty.</p>	<p>Regulatory**</p> <p>Regulatory**</p>	<p>Currently, only \$50 of a child support payment ordered by the court and collected from the noncustodial parent will be given to the custodial parent who is a TANF recipient.</p> <p>Families experience a disincentive for collecting child support income when it negatively affects their benefits under another program.</p>

Actions include: 1) implement current policy, where proper implementation is lacking, 2) sub-regulatory change, 3) regulatory change, and 4) legislative change. The “action required” is not always the only action possible, but is the fastest way to improve the situation for families in need. Some recommendations include more than one action, as noted by an asterisk, to achieve both immediate and longer-term change. A single asterisk () indicates the immediate action should be proper implementation, but regulatory and/or legislative changes should be considered for positive, lasting improvements. Similarly, a double-asterisk (**) indicates the immediate action required may be sub-regulatory or regulatory change, but legislative changes should be considered for positive, lasting improvements.*

Goal II: Build flexibility into policies to meet the individual needs of families moving from welfare to work.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
1. Develop a local office service delivery model that employs an individualized approach to intake, assessment and planning with all TANF applicants and recipients.	Sub-regulatory	<p>Because TANF is time-limited, placement in appropriate individualized activities is critical for clients to overcome barriers and move toward self-sufficiency. Assessment and planning should employ a team casework model, using the expertise of education, employment, and social work specialists in collaboration with the applicant/recipient.</p> <p>Successful “mixed strategy” and assessment models have been implemented in cities and states like Portland, Oregon and Tennessee.</p>
2. Eliminate arbitrary time limits on education and training.	Regulatory	Services and opportunities must be based on individual assessment and need.
3. Establish local office service delivery procedures to maximize client confidentiality, privacy, and safety, especially in cases involving domestic violence, teen parents, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment.	Sub-regulatory**	<p>This will require coordination between IDHS and the Department of Public Aid (IDPA).</p> <p>The current statute regarding confidentiality needs legislative changes for positive lasting improvements.</p>
4. Allow single parents with children under 6 to fulfill their work participation requirement if engaged in work activity for 20 hours per week.	Sub-regulatory/ Regulatory	Federal law allows states to count these families toward its work participation rate, yet Illinois currently requires these families to adhere to a stricter work requirement policy.
5. Exempt homeless families from work requirements.	Regulatory	The lack of consistent shelter is the main barrier to work and self-sufficiency for homeless families. They must be given the flexibility to focus their attention on their housing needs before they are required to meet work requirements.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
6. Train teen intake specialists knowledgeable in adolescent development and policies pertaining to teen parents statewide, and designate administrative staff to coordinate and oversee services.	Sub-regulatory	The rules and requirements that apply to teen parents under various public assistance programs are different than those that apply to adults. Many local office staff are not familiar with these differences which often results in incorrect implementation at the local office and teens who lose, or are denied benefits for which they are eligible. Creating specialists would also decrease diversion of eligible teen parent applicants. Teen specialists are being used in IDHS Chicago Region I/North.
7. Create a transitional TANF eligibility period of at least 4 months for teens getting casework support from IDHS or a Community-Based Organization (CBO) to meet safe living arrangement and school engagement requirements.	Regulatory	Immediate application of the living arrangement and school rules prevents teen parents from accessing the case management and income support they need to stabilize their lives. Restricting their access to TANF cash assistance makes it even more difficult for them to stay in school and maintain adequate housing, and puts them, and their young children, at further risk.
8. Allow clients who have left TANF within the past 6 months due to employment to reapply for cash benefits under an expedited process if they should lose their job.	Regulatory	Many TANF recipients who leave welfare for work will attempt more than one job before they stabilize and permanently leave welfare. Because of their short, and often sporadic work experience, most of these workers are ineligible for unemployment assistance, even if they lose their jobs through no fault of their own. In order to facilitate their rapid return to the workforce, clients should be given the assistance they need during this transition period.
9. Provide child care funds for all required activities and maintain and enforce lack of appropriate child care as “good cause” for clients unable to meet their work requirement.	Implement current policy*	IDHS local office staff have funds available to pay for child care for work and training activities when there is a temporary need of 30 days or less, while the client’s child care subsidy application is pending. However, few families are offered this assistance. Current IDHS policy stipulates that families who are unable to secure appropriate child care, despite the availability of funds or a subsidy, must not be penalized for failure to meet activity requirements. Again, this is not clearly communicated to families or implemented by local office staff, resulting in improper sanction and termination.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<p>10. Keep and improve existing categories of exemptions for barriers to work participation, such as care of a child under age 1, domestic violence exclusion, family care and medical barriers starting by:</p> <p>a) expanding categories of eligibility for medical exemptions.</p> <p>b) establishing clear Central Assessment Unit (CAU) standards for evaluation and granting of exemptions during a recipient's 60-month TANF limit.</p> <p>c) establishing clear CAU standards for evaluation and granting of exemptions during a recipient's application period for SSI after the 60-month TANF limit has been reached.</p>	<p>Implement current policy*</p> <p>Sub-regulatory*</p> <p>Sub-regulatory/ Regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p>	<p>Many exemptions as conceived need significant evaluation and redesign.</p> <p>Currently, the Central Assessment Unit (CAU) of DHS does not distinguish between individuals who cannot work and those who can work with accommodation (e.g. number of hours, environment considerations).</p> <p>These standards should be formulated by those knowledgeable of the Social Security Administration's disabilities claim regulations.</p>
<p>11. Maintain substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and domestic violence services as allowable work activity when a client experiences one of these barriers.</p>	<p>Implement current policy</p>	<p>Placement in appropriate activities is critical for families to overcome barriers and move toward self-sufficiency.</p>
<p>12. Maintain the teen parent option for education as a primary work activity from ages 18 through 21.</p>	<p>Implement current policy</p>	<p>Education completion has a significant impact on job access and earnings throughout a person's lifetime. Supporting education completion among teen parents will produce long-term gains for them as well as their children.</p> <p>This could be accomplished by ensuring that all teen parents can stay in Teen Parent Services case management through age 21.</p>

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<p>b) facilitating knowledge exchange for caseworkers and employment and training liaisons to learn more about local education and training (E&T) programs and to effectively evaluate their quality. Where possible, hire E & T liaisons with a background in education.</p> <p>c) funding bridge programs—vocational programs that accept people with low literacy levels (8.5 or below) and that offer some accommodation or instruction in basic skills but whose primary mission is to prepare participants for placement in career path jobs or further education.</p> <p>d) funding programs that are equipped/trained to work with adults who have learning disabilities.</p> <p>e) establishing local office performance indicators based on a percentage of the caseload that should attend vocational training (see also Goal 5.1).</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p>	<p>While there are some programs for the moderate to severely disabled, a large gap still exists in adequate services for clients who have more mild disabilities (i.e. learning disabilities).</p> <p>Labor-market focused vocational training leads to better, first job placements and greater wage gains.</p>
<p>5. Maintain and improve rules which stop the clock for college attendance for up to 36 months without a work requirement (the “college option”).</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory**</p>	<p>Evidence shows that an Associate’s Degree can earn someone 34% more than they would earn with a high school diploma. A Bachelor’s Degree will result in 65% higher earnings than a high school education.</p>
<p>6. Increase the use of the college option by:</p> <p>a) Requiring caseworkers to discuss the college option with every recipient who has a high school diploma.</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory</p>	<p>Despite the creation of the college option in 1999, a limited number have actually attended college. In many instances, recipients are steered away from this option by caseworkers rewarded for caseload reduction in a “work first” system.</p>

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<p>b) Establishing local office performance indicators based on a percentage of the caseload that should attend college (see Goal 5.1).</p> <p>c) Providing funds to mitigate recipient’s defaulted loans/debt owed to community colleges or negotiating for a debt amnesty/repayment policy with the community colleges.</p> <p>d) Creating and funding, with local colleges, programs that help TANF clients with GEDs and/or high school diplomas transition to college.</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory</p> <p>Sub-regulatory**</p> <p>Sub-regulatory</p>	<p>Currently, small debts (under \$1000) owed to community colleges and state universities can prevent low-income individuals from enrolling in adult basic education, vocational courses, and post-secondary degree programs. These debts were sometimes incurred when recipients enrolled in courses they did not actually start or complete, but from which they did not formally withdraw.</p> <p>The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is a necessary collaborator.</p> <p>Many TANF clients who do begin college, do not have the support to continue the rigorous schedule of being a student, mother, and employee. Transition programs preparing clients for this commitment have proven effective.</p>
<p>7. Create transitional jobs programs.</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory**</p>	<p>Transitional Jobs Programs have proven to be an effective strategy for helping the hard to employ—those with little work history, and with one or more other factors such as substance abuse, domestic violence, low literacy, a criminal record—become self-sufficient. Time limited, paid positions with real work experience and expectations are provided by a nonprofit where the participant is matched with an employee mentor. One Chicago transitional jobs program targeting TANF participants has shown that nearly 80% have found unsubsidized employment. Compared to the group of individuals without transitional jobs, the participants were employed at substantially higher wages and at 90 and 180 days, continued to be employed at much greater percentages.</p>

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
8. Keep and improve the Teen Parent Services program by extending voluntary services to all eligible teen parents completing their high school, vocational or college education up to the age of 21.	Regulatory**	Recently proposed regulatory changes to 89 Ill. Adm. Code 112, Section 112.83 accomplish much of this, but the regulations need further refinement.
9. Redirect funds for the Abstinence Only Until Marriage program to a more comprehensive youth development program promoting self-sufficiency.	Sub-regulatory**	Youth development is a proven pregnancy prevention strategy. An appointed committee could develop an RFP and recommend which state entity should administer the new program . Any sex education in Illinois should be comprehensive and medically accurate.

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Goal IV: Make work pay with a range of job- and income-related supports.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
1. Allow recipients to keep their full cash grant for the first 90 days of employment, then implement Work Pays budgeting to calculate any transitional grant eligibility.	Sub-regulatory**	This enhanced income disregard option encourages family stability with employment and enables families to meet some of their own employment costs. Employee retention issues may be addressed for employers.
2. Extend child care eligibility to 85% of current year State Median Income.	Regulatory	Increases in the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) could help offset the increased cost to the State.
<p>3. Provide broad transportation assistance to all low-income families by:</p> <p>a) maintaining the exemption for one automobile from assets when determining TANF and Food Stamp (FS) eligibility and extending this exemption to all cash and medical only recipients.</p> <p>b) including a transportation plan as a component of all Responsibility and Services Plans (RSP) and supporting these plans with a mass transit subsidy, assistance with car repair or insurance, drivers education, and car maintenance training.</p> <p>c) creating a coordinating committee including IDOT, IDHS, and regional transit authorities to assist communities in developing transportation resources (e.g. car loan, job shuttle programs) for those currently without transportation options.</p>	<p>Sub-regulatory**</p> <p>Sub-regulatory**</p>	<p>Illinois' family-sustaining jobs are all too often geographically distant from low-income rural and urban households.</p> <p>This extension would allow Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (AABD) recipients to receive the exemption.</p> <p>This committee could be charged with coordinating Job Access and Reverse Commute proposals and submitting a single state request for funds to the US Department of Transportation.</p>
<p>4. Provide additional resources to promote job retention and advancement including:</p> <p>a) expanded crisis funds to prevent the nonpayment of a rent or mortgage and family homelessness.</p>	Regulatory	National research results show that housing stability promotes employment stability.

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) extended case management/job coaching up to 24 months after employment through contracted job services agencies. c) public/private partnerships to promote Employee Assistance Program (EAP) development and access by small companies and their “at risk” employees. d) transitional jobs programs (see Goal 3.7). e) sector-focused “bridge” programs (see Goal 3.4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-regulatory Sub-regulatory Sub-regulatory** Sub-regulatory 	
<p>5. Ensure access to, and maximize usage of, work supports (Medicaid, KidCare, FamilyCare, Food Stamps, child care, and the Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC]) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) implementing and monitoring a process which informs TANF recipients of their eligibility for work supports and enrolls/recertifies them at the time of application, employment, and termination of cash assistance. b) expanding outreach to low-income working families through coordinated and collaborative public information campaigns including attention to the special needs of immigrant communities. c) creating web-based information and screening tools, like RealBenefits, and making these available in schools, community health centers, and other community-based organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-regulatory Sub-regulatory Sub-regulatory 	<p>Signing families up for non-cash benefits must not be used as a way to divert clients from TANF.</p> <p>Many of these supports are at least partially funded with federal dollars. Illinois should work to increase and take full advantage of this federal investment in low-income families.</p>

Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
d) improving and expanding the RealBenefits pilot project to include eligibility determination for Food Stamps, TANF, KidCare/FamilyCare, child care and the EITC, and facilitate application processing.	Sub-regulatory	RealBenefits software is being piloted through a federally funded project of the Illinois Hunger Coalition to determine eligibility and produce an application for Food Stamps benefits that is then transmittable to IDHS.
e) allowing families to recertify for work supports via internet, phone, fax, or mail and forgo face-to-face interviews unless determined necessary or desired by the recipient.	Sub-regulatory	Working families have tight schedules that may prevent them from attending a meeting at an IDHS office that is only open during the hours when they have to be at work.
f) exploring options and the technology for coordinating eligibility requirements, verification, application, and redetermination procedures so that one visit to a provider can initiate the receipt or recertification of all possible work supports.	Sub-regulatory	

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Specific Recommendations	Action Required	Considerations
3. Expand monitoring of caseload reduction to account for all reasons that families may be removed from the caseload.	Sub-regulatory	Track numbers of those whose cases are terminated and why; those who are sanctioned and why; those who are “swapped” and why, and those who voluntarily renounce their cash grant and why. In August 2002 alone, 2,856 TANF cases were “swapped” or “delinked”, only 788 of these due to an increase in income. Advocates are concerned this is an intentional practice to meet caseload reduction goals and divert eligible families from cash assistance.
4. Break down all of the above data by demographics including race, age, local office, etc. and monitor service delivery by demographic categories.	Sub-regulatory	Research has shown disparities in how TANF recipients are treated and in what services they are provided.
5. Eliminate current classification of an “available-to-work” category.		This “one size fits all” designation is sometimes used to deter teen parents and others from other allowable work activities and is contrary to the aims of an individualized assessment and planning model.
6. Institute quality standards to ensure that 100% of the people who want to apply for any or all government-administered benefits have applications taken (see Goal 1.5).	Sub-regulatory	Customer testing may be necessary to end diversionary practices.
7. Implement quality-control measures throughout the system.	Sub-regulatory	Too often, sound policy is undermined by faulty implementation practices.

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Goal VI: Invest in the state's workforce with increased funding for education, training and work-related supports to low-income families.

Families leaving welfare for work join the growing ranks of the working poor in Illinois in our current system. Others cycle on and off TANF unable to secure and retain family-sustaining employment due to their limited work histories, low educational attainment, unaddressed work/family barriers, or the lack of viable job skills for viable jobs. Funding for improvements in one program can only have limited impact on poverty reduction. The working poor are immigrants, single-parents, two-parent families in urban and rural communities with limited employment options, ex-convicts who have done their time but face employment discrimination.

The Governor has an opportunity to create a unified, coordinated system of public and private programs capable of meeting the needs of low-income workers for greater skills and family-sustaining wages, and of employers for skilled workers and business growth. This will require the savvy acquisition and use of federal dollars, the generation and appropriation of new state revenues, and the wise stewardship of all targeted funding. The development of a skilled and stable workforce starts with an investment in quality education for all Illinois' children, beginning with preschool and continuing through elementary and secondary school. Real vocational options must be available to youth and the unemployed or underemployed of any age through innovative occupational skills training programs and academic institutions. Funding must be adequate to detect and address disabilities or deficiencies so that all who want to work can work. The state must also recognize that individuals in a skilled and stable workforce should be able to expect returns for their investments: affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, and a refundable earned income tax credit.

A	B	O	U	T
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Founded in 1981, the Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) is an organization that works with its members to ensure access to employment and career advancement opportunities for people in poverty. With 18 original members, CJC has grown to include 100 community-based organizations, civic groups, businesses and individuals. CJC and its members are committed to helping disadvantaged Chicagoans gain access to the education and training they need to enter the labor market, retain family-supporting employment, and pursue sustainable careers.

CJC pursues its mission through advocacy, applied research, public education and capacity-building initiatives focused on influencing the development or reform of public policies and programs. Our efforts are grounded in the perspectives of our members, who contribute their expertise as direct service practitioners, advocates, researchers and employers. CJC's work is also guided by the results of demonstration projects that test innovative solutions to pressing employment problems. By organizing members and other interested parties around workforce development, welfare reform, economic and community development issues, CJC fosters dialogue and cooperative strategies that effect change.

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