



## Women on Welfare, Violence, Alcohol Use, Service Use, and Welfare Trajectory

**Overview:** The fundamental question for this project is “How can services mitigate cycles of violence and substance abuse in the lives of low-income women.” This study targets poor female welfare recipients and seeks to obtain information necessary to address public health prevention, treatment, and community interventions among this population. The investigators are conducting secondary analysis of data from a large representative sample of welfare recipients. They will describe service use among women reporting interpersonal violence and substance abuse over 5 years. They will explore whether service use decreases repeat violence, substance abuse, and welfare dependency. The data source is a 5-year longitudinal study of 1,235 women applying for welfare in 2001 from a northern California county. The women were interviewed at baseline and at 12, 24, 36, and 48 months after the initial interview.

**Anticipated Results:** The study will provide data on four topics: (1) the scope and extent of interpersonal violence and alcohol and drug problems among women on welfare during the course of the 5-year study, (2) the impact of violent victimization and substance abuse on women’s ability to perform in new welfare-to-work programs, (3) whether women experiencing violent victimization with or without substance use problems are being identified by the welfare system and are receiving appropriate services, and (4) how service might decrease the impact of repeated violence and substance abuse on women’s attempts to gain economic independence.

**Significance:** Although the study is in its early stages and no results are yet available, the potential from this grant is high. Several studies have described a high prevalence of violent victimization among women on welfare, yet few have documented the impact of violence and problem drinking and/or heavy drug use (substance abuse) as impediments to self sufficiency. The proposed analyses will be carried out at a time when the welfare rolls have dropped dramatically and there is growing interest in the remaining clients who may have multiple barriers to employment, including histories of violent victimization and substance abuse. In the present economy, there is an even greater mandate to support individuals to become independent. Addressing the role of alcohol in women who are caught in the spiral of violence, poverty, and alcohol abuse potentially can improve the quality of life, health, and productivity of this special population.

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