How Long Do Families Stay on Welfare?

Minnesota has two family cash assistance programs: the Diversionary Work Program (DWP) and the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). Based on an assessment of employability, approximately half of all applicants for assistance enroll in DWP which offers a maximum of four months of assistance and a focus on rapid employment. The other half (applicants that are deemed unlikely to benefit from the rapid employment focus of DWP) enroll in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) which provides cash assistance and employment services for up to 60 months.

The chart shows the proportion of cases that remain on the two programs in the 24 months subsequent to their application. During the first four months, the proportion is similar for both programs. At the fifth month, cases that began on DWP are either closed because they have exhausted their eligibility (which explains the large drop in the proportion of cases on) or they are converted to MFIP.

Twelve months after enrollment, 72 percent of those who enrolled in DWP and 60 percent of those who initially enrolled in MFIP were off cash assistance. After 24 months, 79 percent of the caregivers that enrolled in DWP and 70 percent of the caregivers who initially enrolled in MFIP had exited both programs.

When comparing DWP to MFIP, be aware that the two programs represent two different populations. DWP selects applicants that are more employable than those who enroll directly into MFIP. Therefore, a shorter length of time on assistance would be expected for DWP applicants than for MFIP applicants.

For more information about DWP outcomes, see the DWP Fifth and Twelfth Month Outcomes – July 2004 to April 2010 and Evaluation Note Issue 16: Diversionary Work Program caseload cost and cost impact reports. For more information on months counted toward the 60-month MFIP time limit and months of DWP use, see the MFIP and DWP Caseload and Participant Characteristics Reports series. These reports are available at www.dhs.state.mn.us (Economic Supports/MFIP/Reports).