

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON WELFARE

Poverty is an unfortunate reality in American society, with nearly two-thirds of its victims being children. Adult recipients of welfare include the working poor, whose full-time minimum wage salaries do not meet the poverty level. Many other adult recipients find themselves forced into poverty by the wrenching employment losses caused by a changing American economy. The Milwaukee Jewish Council believes that the framework of public policy debates concerning poverty and welfare in our society should be based on the following principles:

1. Helping the Jewish poor as well as those in the general community achieve self-sufficiency has been a fundamental commitment of the Jewish people. Jewish tradition and values emphasize the responsibility of the larger community in providing for the poor to enable them to live independently with dignity.
2. The Milwaukee Jewish Council is committed to support strategies to reduce poverty and to promote economic independence, maintenance of the family, social well-being for all members of society and to remove disincentives to work. We call upon government at all levels to pursue strategies which would lead to job creation, provision of child care, provision of health insurance and adequate skills training.
3. Jewish law has always emphasized the responsibility of the community to treat the poor with dignity so as to help them avoid the degradation and stigma of poverty. Benefits and programs should be administered with respect for the dignity, privacy and due process rights of those receiving them.
4. Government at every level has a moral responsibility to enact laws and regulations and to adopt policies to provide employment opportunities for the poor and to provide them with shelter, clothing and food as needed.
5. Our tradition teaches that the responsibility of government in no way diminishes individual and community responsibilities to aid the poor and the responsibility of the individual to strive to attain a position of economic independence. The Milwaukee Jewish Council calls upon the Jewish community to continue and expand upon its efforts to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and care for those unable to provide for themselves.
6. We recognize that teenage pregnancy is a key factor in the perpetuation of poverty. We urge the establishment of effective policies and programs to reduce teen pregnancy by all levels of government, social service agencies, and religious and community organizations.

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