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Pathways to Employment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment is emphasized as a major pathway off welfare in the federal reform of the AFDC program¹ and in recent welfare reform proposals in Washington State.

Five years of **Family Income Study** data were analyzed to determine which factors affected the likelihood of employment for women who received public assistance. For this analysis, we used a sample of women who were of working age and who were on public assistance in 1988. Some women left assistance during the five-year study period.

What INCREASES the Likelihood of Employment?

- **Vocational Education and Training.** Enrollment in vocational education and training in the previous 12 months increased the likelihood of employment by **78 percent.**²
- **An Additional Month of Paid Work Experience.** An additional month of paid work experience (*beyond the average of 3 months in the previous 12 months*) increased the likelihood of employment by **47 percent.**³
- **An Additional Year of Education.** An additional year of education (*beyond the 11-year average*) increased the likelihood of employment by **5 percent.**

What DECREASES the Likelihood of Employment?

- **Toddler in the Household.** The presence of a toddler (child one to three years old) in the household decreased the likelihood of employment by **30 percent.**
- **Infant in the Household.** The presence of an infant (child under 12 months) in the household decreased the likelihood of employment by **23 percent.**
- **Overnight Hospitalization of Youngest Child.** An overnight hospitalization of the youngest child decreased the likelihood of employment by **9 percent.**
- **Age of Woman.** An additional year of age (*beyond the average of 33 years*) decreased the likelihood of employment by **9 percent.**

¹ Aid to Families with Dependent Children was reformed under the federal Family Support Act of 1988. The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program within the Act emphasizes employment, job search, job development, and education and training for employment.

² Please see the technical appendix for definitions of "likelihood of employment" and other terms.

³ Paid work experience is discussed in more detail on page 5. The technical appendix includes a discussion of the research methodology.