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Substance Abuse and Women on Welfare*This Report Available Full-Text in Print Only*

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ABSTRACT

Overall, 28 percent of adult individuals receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) abuse or are addicted to drugs and alcohol, a higher rate than the 20 percent of people in a comparable age group not receiving public assistance. Since almost 90 percent of adult AFDC recipients are female, this report focuses on this population.

- Women receiving AFDC are nearly twice as likely to abuse or be addicted to alcohol and illicit drugs than women not receiving AFDC (27 percent compared to 14 percent).
- 37 percent of AFDC women 18 to 24 years of age abuse or are addicted to alcohol and drugs.
- Mothers receiving AFDC are three times more likely to abuse or be addicted to alcohol and drugs than mothers not receiving AFDC (27 percent compared to 9 percent).

The substance abuse problem in AFDC is not confined to alcohol or one type of drug. Women receiving AFDC are almost twice as likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or cocaine as women not on public assistance. Among women on AFDC:

- 50 percent smoked cigarettes in the last month, compared to 29 percent of non-AFDC women.
- 12 percent consumed five or more drinks in one sitting at least two times in the past month, compared to 6 percent of non-AFDC women.
- 23 percent used an illicit drug in the past year, compared to 12 percent of non-AFDC women.
- 17 percent used marijuana in the past year, compared to 8 percent of non-AFDC women.
- 34 percent of AFDC mothers who abuse illegal drugs also abuse alcohol, compared to 17 percent of non-AFDC mothers.

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