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THE ADMINISTRATION OF WELFARE BUDGETS:
THE VIEWS OF AFDC RECIPIENTS

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ABSTRACT

Since income-maintenance is widely conceded to be the heart of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, much attention has focused on the administration of the budget. How is the budget for a family established, and how may it be modified; how often is it changed and under what circumstances? How much caseworker-client interaction is there in the area of budget, how much friction over the allocation and expenditure of funds?

Basing their conclusions on survey data collected from Wisconsin AFDC recipients in six counties, the authors find that budget levels do not fluctuate much and there is little caseworker intervention in client spending. On the other hand, clients take little advantage of the flexible features for supplementing their budgets, such as Special Needs Items, and attempt to get by on their basic monthly checks.

If the budget is not a subject of controversy between caseworker and client, or of control over the client by the caseworker, it is due in large part to the lack of discussion between them. Despite paper provisions for extra needs and elaborate provisions for treating earned income of family members, most women operate on budgets that are static, unresponsive, and, at best, minimal.

Income maintenance is the core of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC). Beyond all else, the most basic need of the welfare client is economic. How and to what extent this need is handled bears on practically every policy issue of the program. And for this reason, some of the harshest criticisms of public assistance concern the administration of AFDC budgets.

The following are some of the major criticisms:

(1) Not only is the computation of the basic budgets very complicated but they are also subject to frequent changes. Not only do the caseworkers themselves frequently fail to figure the budgets correctly, but they also fail to explain the reasons for the budget, as well as the changes, to the clients. The result is that the system appears to the clients mysterious and highly discretionary, if not arbitrary.

(2) The usual approach of AFDC is to set basic budgets at minimum levels of subsistence and then provide a program of extra allowances for special needs or exceptional circumstances. In some states, such as Wisconsin, the special grants provisions are quite liberal, at least as they appear on the books. Nevertheless, it is claimed, the success of these programs is largely nullified because caseworkers do not advise clients on what is available or they discourage clients from asking for extra monies. Furthermore, the system itself requires the client to ask, justify, and in fact beg, for items that are really necessities, the types of things that other people in our affluent society enjoy without question. The result of this system is the humiliation and degradation of welfare clients.

(3) A basic principle established by federal law was that AFDC assistance be in the form of a money payment and that the client have freedom of choice in spending it. One of the purposes of this requirement

was to remove the stigma thought attached to assistance in kind. It is claimed, however, that in fact there is extensive caseworker supervision over how clients spend the money payment because budgets are calculated at low levels, are changed often, and special needs have to be justified. Thus, the caseworker does in fact review how the money is spent.

(4) Budget administration of this character gives the caseworker extensive discretionary control over the welfare client and places the client in a very dependent, powerless, and resentful position vis-a-vis the caseworker. It is, in fact, a coercive relationship which is further complicated by the rehabilitative or social service component of AFDC. This social service component gives the caseworker extensive authority to inquire into and attempt to change the non-economic aspects of the AFDC family. It is claimed, however, that a social service relationship cannot be built on what is already a coercive relationship, and that the result is a further invasion of the privacy of welfare clients. This is one reason why it is argued that social services must be separated from income maintenance.

These are some of the more serious charges made against the administration of AFDC budgets. In this paper, we will attempt to examine some of these issues. First, we will examine the Wisconsin state policies and then we will turn to the clients themselves. We will attempt to show how in fact budgets are made and how, from the clients' point of view, they are administered.

A. State Policy

The determination of financial need is a continuing process. It is based on the difference between the client's resources and her needs.

Need is calculated on state-wide standards of living established by the Wisconsin State Department of Health, and Social Services.¹ Because both needs and resources fluctuate with changing circumstances, budget and eligibility are always subject to review.

The budget for the AFDC family is separated into three parts:

(1) Combined Allowance, (2) Shelter, (3) Special Need Items.

The Combined Allowance covers food, clothing, personal expenses, fuel, utilities, regular school expenses, and household supplies. It is reduced when fuel and/or utilities is included in the rent or other shelter cost. The allowance is a state-wide standard. At the time of this study, the monthly allowance for AFDC was as follows:

Table 1

Combined Monthly Allowances for AFDC Families^{*}

No. of Persons in Assistance Group †	Family CA †	CA If Fuel is Provided †	CA If all Utilities are Provided †	CA If both Fuel and Utilities are Provided †
1	\$ 63	\$ 51	\$ 55	\$ 43
2	99	87	91	79
3	126	114	118	109
4	149	137	141	129
5	187	171	177	161
6	217	201	207	191
7	248	232	238	222
8	275	259	265	249
9	304	288	294	278
10	329	313	319	303
11 and over	Add \$30 per additional person to the appropriate allowance for 10 persons.			

^{*} Effective July 1, 1967

† To the above allowance: Add \$8 for each child 13 years thru 20.
Deduct \$9 for each child 5 yrs. and younger.

¹The data in Part A, State Policy, are from the regulations of the State Department of Health and Social Services Manual, Chapter III, Need Determination. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations in this Part are from Chapter III.

Modifications of the combined allowance can be made for such things as special education costs, or for clothing or for personal expense adjustments such as those caused by the hospitalization of a family member or by the presence in the household of what the state department calls an "essential person," for example, a housekeeper.²

The Shelter Allowance includes rent, and expenses related to property ownership (e.g., taxes, mortgage payments, property insurance, minor upkeep and repairs). The goal of the AFDC program is for every family to have "a home of adequate size, located in decent surroundings, equipped and furnished for homemaking. This in no way implies luxury, but suggests a satisfactory state of repair, adequate sleeping arrangements, adequate homemaking equipment for cooking and eating purposes, proper sanitation and safety facilities."

Home ownership is allowed if the cost does not exceed "a fair rental for modest housing according to community standards." This rule is a guideline since "absolute compliance will not always be possible." The homeownership family is to be allowed \$4.00 per month for minor upkeep and repairs.

The rental allowance is for the actual rent that must be paid but "the cost shall not exceed a fair rental for modest housing according to community standards." Counties can set rent maximums, subject to state review, if they are "realistic." They can also budget less than the actual rent if the rent is considered "excessive" but in this event the agencies have to budget "at least the amount of rental of modest housing." If fuel and utilities are not included in the rent, the allowance rates

²If clothing and personal adjustments have to be made, the rates per month are:

	Clothing	Personal
Adult (not in an institution)	\$7	\$5
Child aged 13-20	9	3
6-12	8	2
0-5	5	2

per month are:

Fuel and utilities	\$20.00
Fuel	12.00
Utilities	8.00

Special Need Items are for "unusual needs which are not common to all recipients but are requirements to meet special circumstances of some." According to state policy, these items "are as vital to some clients as the basic need items. Careful consideration of the circumstances of each client determines which special items are needed." There are 23 Special Need Items applicable to AFDC families. Most are described in Table 2.

Table 2

Examples of Special Grant Items: Allowances; Conditions

Special Grant Items	Monthly Allowances	Conditions Under Which Budgeted
1. <u>Laundry</u> 1-4 persons 5 or more	\$5.00 9.00	When service is not available to blind or physically handicapped, one in poor health, a boarder or roomer, or a recipient who lacks laundry facilities.
2. <u>Misc. Services</u> such as shopping, errands, snow-shoveling	3.00	Inability of client to perform essential services.
3. <u>Telephone</u>	5.00	Essential to occupation; when health conditions or remoteness of residence necessitates. <u>Assistance shall not be denied solely because recipient has telephone service which cannot be budgeted.</u>
4. <u>Water and/or Sewage</u>	4.00	When recipient must purchase the service.
5. <u>Clothing</u>	Reasonable cost	When clothing supply is badly depleted; to meet special needs of handicapped persons; when needed by an adult attending school; to allow for maternity clothing as needed.

Special Grant Items	Monthly Allowance	When Budgeted
<u>Gym Clothing</u>	Reasonable Cost	Gym suits and shoes if required by the school.
<u>Layette</u>	\$30 - complete 15 - partial	If a CA has not been allowed for more than 2 months prior to the birth of the child, a layette may be allowed.
6. <u>Garbage Collection</u>	As paid	When necessary.
7. <u>Household Replacements</u> such as refrigerator, stove, washing machine, chairs, tables, beds, bedding, sweeper, iron, etc.	Reasonable amount Prior authorization of the agency required. If purchased from dealer allowance is based on billing, receipt or contract with vendor.	When family lacks essential household furnishings.
8. <u>Housekeeping Service</u>	Reasonable cost, plus \$30 for food when meals provided.	In case of illness, incapacity, death or absence from home of person primarily responsible for performing this service. When worker cannot determine extent to which incapacitated person can meet his responsibilities, recommendation of a physician may be obtained.
9. <u>Moving Expense</u>	As paid, prior to or following move, substantiated by estimate, receipt or billing.	When approved and necessary to maintain or improve family well-being.
10. <u>School Fees</u>	As paid. Not to include tuition, school lunches, special uniforms.	As needed, based on billing (each semester or yearly). Covering charges such as book rental, locker rental, towel service, laboratory and shop fees, activity fees, required graduation expenses, material and supplies.
11. <u>Education and Training Costs - Adults</u>	As paid.	When required to cover tuition, books, supplies, misc. needs.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 12. <u>Transportation</u>
<u>Automobiles and</u>
<u>Other Motor</u>
<u>Vehicles</u> | Public Transportation:
Based on prevailing
transportation rates.

Motor Vehicles: Based
on mileage policy of
agency staff members;
a minimum of 7¢ per
mile. | Necessary to obtain
medical care, to per-
form necessary activ-
ities such as shopping
or school attendance;
to permit visitation
of immediate family
members. |
| <u>School Transpor-</u>
<u>tation</u> | Prevailing rates. | Where the child must
attend school out of
his school district
or at the request of
the parent, an allow-
ance may be made for
transportation. |
| 13. <u>Major Property</u>
<u>Repairs</u> such as
roofing, insulating,
plastering, painting,
plumbing, wiring. | Prior authorization
required when feasible.
Allowance is based on
written estimate,
billing or receipt. | When necessary to
improve or maintain
housing standards. |
| 14. <u>Special Deposits--</u>
<u>Public Utilities</u> | As paid. | When required for
electricity, water,
fuel, or an essential
telephone. |
| 15. <u>Spouse's Expense</u>
<u>for Providing Care</u> | \$20 - \$60, dependent
on circumstances in
the case. | To avoid nursing home
care and/or when the
spouse must pay for
necessary services
that he or she is
unable to provide
because of caring for
the recipient. |

Special allowances are also authorized for life insurance premiums if the insured has dependent beneficiaries and her physical or mental condition is such that she cannot obtain other insurance. Separate rules cover education and training expenses. Regular monthly expenses for normal school supplies (e.g., pencils, paper, ink, notebooks, etc.) are included in the Combined Allowance. Special needs grant can be made for book and locker rents, towel service, laboratory and shop fees, activity fees, materials and supplies for industrial arts, home economics, art instruction and "other similar classes." Adults may also get, as a special need, the cost of tuition, books, supplies, or "other miscellaneous needs."

If the parent has sufficient earnings, the cost of child care is deducted from the earnings. If the parent is not working, this cost can be budgeted if the parent is in a training course "likely to lead to employment," or if child care is necessary because of the parent's physical or mental incapacity.

During the period of this study, the average grant per AFDC family in the six counties, together with comparisons of the family's "poverty line" was as follows:

Table 3

AFDC Grants and Poverty Guidelines

County	Respondents Average Grant	Average Family Size (mothers & children)	Average Grant per Family of all AFDC Recipients July, 1967	Average Family Size
Milwaukee	\$ 173.23	4.3	\$ 178.37	3.9
Dane	223.09	4.0	207.07	3.8
Brown	185.92	4.6	175.13	4.1
Walworth	197.89	4.3	186.61	4.2
Sauk	151.86	3.9	146.92	3.7
Dodge	186.00	4.7	175.08	4.0

Family Size	(N)	Poverty Guidelines of Female-Headed Households ³	Respondent AFDC Grants on Annual Basis (July, 1967 x 12)	% of Poverty Line
1	7	\$ 1595	\$ 1737	109
2	122	2105	1540	72
3	147	2515	1949	78
4	141	3320	2207	66
5	88	3895	2543	65
6	85	4395	2819	64
7	35	5310 (7 or more)	2917	54
8	28		3040	
More	25		3502	

³The figures used in this column represent the poverty line as described by Mollie Orshansky in "The Shape of Poverty in 1966," Social Security Bulletin, March 1968, page 4.

The grant per family does not necessarily reflect the family's total income.⁴ About 20 per cent of the respondents work. Children also work. And there are a variety of ways in which earned income is in fact added to the monthly AFDC grant. Of the first \$80 of earned monthly income, \$20 is exempt, plus one half of the remaining \$60, or a total of \$50 per child. But the total earned income exempted cannot exceed \$150 per child per month. Apart from exempt income, there is a \$40 expense allowance for every member of the family 16 or older working or in training more than 35 hours per week. "Inconsequential income"-- defined as "unpredictable, irregular, and of no appreciable effect on continuing need"-- is also not included in the budget. Then, there is unreported income. At the present time, we lack hard data on how much total income AFDC families in fact have.⁵ But we are probably safe in assuming that many families do not reach, much less exceed their poverty lines, and even these levels are not affluence.

The Wisconsin state AFDC system is fairly liberal in comparison with those of other states. There is no maximum grant per family regardless of need, thus 100 per cent of need is always budgeted. In addition, average grants per family are comparatively high. As far as the Wisconsin AFDC families are concerned, the program combines regular support at fairly low levels (at least as compared to poverty line standards) with a system of flexibly administered grants to take care of exceptional needs. This combination, it is argued, places very

⁴In addition to money payments, AFDC recipients are automatically eligible for Medicaid, which covers, without cost to the recipients, medical, dental, hospital and drug costs.

⁵In an independent study, Joseph Heffernan has found that 83.6% of the total income of AFDC recipients comes from their grant. However, half of the women had no income other than their grant.

dependent people in the hands of caseworkers having a good deal of discretionary power. It is claimed that recipients in this position are either confused or ignorant about budget computations, are afraid to ask for "extras," or are resentful and humiliated by having to ask for the "amenities" that are available.

B. Attitudes of the Recipients

The state regulations urge the county caseworkers to explain the budget to the client. "Computing a budget with the cooperation of a family. . . is essential in understanding the specific nature and extent of need. Each applicant or recipient is assisted in understanding the basis for his grant and the budgetable items. Any revisions due to changed circumstances or policy are discussed fully with him." The regulations do not explicitly impose on the caseworkers the duty of disclosing to the client the availability of special grants. The regulations do say, however, that special grants "are as vital to some clients as the basic need items" and that "careful consideration of the circumstances of each client determines which special items are needed." In this section, we will examine the clients' points of view on how these policies are carried out. What is the nature and character of caseworker discussions about the budget? What are client attitudes toward the administration of the budget?

Client responses are from a survey of 766 AFDC recipients taken in the summer and fall of 1967 in Milwaukee County, the state's largest, and five other Wisconsin counties. Two of these counties (Dane and Brown) contained middle-sized cities (Madison and Green Bay), and three were rural (Walworth, Sauk, and Dodge). In Milwaukee and the middle-sized counties, the respondents were randomly selected; in the rural counties, all AFDC recipients were solicited.⁶ The distribution of

⁶The average response rate for the six counties was about 80 per cent.

responses by county was as follows:

Table 4
AFDC Recipients Surveyed by County

<u>Milwaukee</u>	<u>Dane</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Walworth</u>	<u>Sauk</u>	<u>Dodge</u>	<u>Total</u>
302	179	86	80	57	62	766

In Table 5 we have tabulated by county the percentages of AFDC clients who reported having discussions with their caseworkers about their budgets, and the clients' reactions to these discussions. About three-quarters of the sample reported this activity, and there was not much variation among the counties. Very few of the clients were bothered or annoyed by the discussions. Over 40 per cent found the discussions "usually" or "very" helpful. Only about a quarter found them "not at all" helpful. There was some variation among the rural counties, suggesting differences in administrative methods.

Table 5

Discussions about Budget and Client Attitudes

"Does your caseworker ever discuss your budget with you?"

"To what extent does it bother you to have your caseworker discuss your budget?"

"To what extent do you find these discussions on your budget helpful?"

	<u>Milw.</u>	<u>Dane</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Walw.</u>	<u>Sauk</u>	<u>Dodge</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Budget is Discussed</u>	68.9%	74.9%	73.3%	77.5%	77.2%	80.6%	73.2% (766)
<u>Bothered?*</u>							
Very much	8.3%	5.2%	8.1%	3.2%	2.3%	8.0%	6.5%
Moderately	7.5	4.5	3.2	1.6	11.4	2.0	5.4
Slightly	11.7	10.4	8.1	11.3	18.2	8.0	11.1
Not at all	72.8	79.9	80.6	83.9	68.2	82.0	77.1
	(206)	(134)	(62)	(62)	(44)	(50)	(558)
<u>Helpful?*</u>							
Very	25.7%	18.7%	25.4%	30.6%	11.4%	28.0%	23.6%
Usually	17.5	16.4	23.8	14.5	25.0	18.0	18.2
Some	28.2	37.3	30.2	24.2	47.7	34.0	32.1
Not at all	28.6	27.6	20.6	30.6	15.9	20.0	25.7
	(206)	(134)	(63)	(62)	(44)	(50)	(559)

* Percentages based on the numbers who reported having the discussions.

For practically all of the clients (85 per cent), aid grants had been changed during the time they were in the program. The average number of changes was 1.9 for the entire sample, with little variation by county. There was approximately 1 change per year for the recipients. Thus, despite the fact that budget and eligibility are supposed to be subject to constant review, aid grants were changed infrequently. The advantage of this pattern of administration is, of course, that it gives the AFDC family a measure of stability-- they know how much they can count on from month to month. On the other hand, the pressure of low AFDC budgets is supposed to be relieved by the flexibility of the system: individual family needs change and budgets should change accordingly. Unless we assume that needs did not change very much over the course of a year--probably an unlikely assumption--budgets were not administered flexibly.

How did the grant changes come about? For over 80 per cent of those reporting grant changes, the changes were "more or less automatic" and the client did not "have to bring special facts to the attention of the caseworker" to bring the change about. The rest of the sample participated actively in about one grant change.

Finally, more than four fifths of those who had changes in the aid grant said that their caseworkers did tell them the reasons for the changes and that they "usually understood why the changes were made." The tabulations for the aid grant changes are in Table 6.

Table 6

Changes in the Aid Grant, by County

		<u>Milw.</u>	<u>Dane</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Walw.</u>	<u>Sauk</u>	<u>Dodge</u>	<u>Total</u>
Aid Grant Changed		83.8%	83.8%	83.7%	85.0%	91.2%	90.3%	85.0% (766)
No. Times*	1	36.4%	40.0%	25.0%	40.0%	33.3%	25.9%	34.9%
	2	31.4	24.8	22.2	18.5	15.7	31.5	26.3
	3	20.7	22.1	26.4	16.9	23.5	20.4	21.6
	4	7.0	6.2	16.7	6.2	5.9	9.3	7.9
	5	2.1	3.4	4.2	9.2	9.8	3.7	4.1
	6	1.2	2.1	2.8	4.6	7.8	5.6	2.9
	7	1.2	1.4	2.8	4.6	3.9	3.7	2.2
Average**		1.8	1.4	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.0
Times/year		.8	.7	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.0
Changes "more or less automatic"	**	84.2%	82.9%	73.6%	88.2%	82.7%	85.7%	83.2%
Caseworker told reasons*		82.9%	96.6%	94.4%	83.8%	96.2%	94.6%	89.4%
Client understood reasons*		87.0%	95.9%	94.4%	82.4%	90.4%	96.4%	90.3%

*Percentages based on those who had grant changes.

**"Average" is for the last three years or since coming on the program.

Despite the apparent low levels of support and the infrequent grant changes, almost 60 per cent of the respondents said that they can "manage pretty well" on their budgets. What accounts for this? Perhaps the level of grant is the explanation. The Sauk County recipients are least likely to report that they can manage pretty well and that county has the lowest average grant per family. Managing may also be related to expectations, both of clients and of caseworkers. We will explore this question more fully in later papers, but will offer some tentative hypotheses here. In Dane County the percentage saying they can manage was considerably lower than in Brown County, yet the average grant per family in Dane County is higher than in Brown County. The explanation for the difference may lie in the expectations of the respondents, which in turn, are the product of both the personality and social characteristics of the AFDC respondents and the nature of county administration.

The Dane County Department supposedly is more professionalized and more progressive than that of Brown County. The caseworkers in Dane County are more active in stimulating clients than the Brown County Department. Moreover, in Dane County, university people and activists have contact with welfare clients, and communication among welfare recipients is better developed through welfare rights activities. These kinds of things may produce less willingness to report an ability to manage pretty well on the grant.

The Special Needs Program is conceived of as a relatively flexible response to particular needs of clients. Two-thirds of the recipients had asked their caseworker for extra money for special needs. The number of items requested was about 2 per respondent. Moreover, clients made only about one request per year or less. Consequently, although a high proportion of clients have used the special needs provision program they have used it infrequently.

Table 7

Requests for Special Needs, by County

	<u>Milw.</u>	<u>Dane</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Walw.</u>	<u>Sauk</u>	<u>Dodge</u>	<u>Total</u>
Asked for extra needs	74.5%	81.6%	52.3%	52.5%	49.1%	54.3%	67.9%
Requests/respondent*	2.3	2.5	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.3	2.0
Requests/year	1.1	1.3	.7	.6	.6	.9	1.0

* Average for the last three years or since coming on the program.

In considering the relationship between being able to manage on the budget and making special requests, it could be argued that those who have difficulty in managing would be more likely to make requests. On the other hand, since a high proportion of requests are granted (see Table 8), those who make requests would be better able to manage pretty

well. In four counties (Brown, Walworth, Sauk and Dodge), two-thirds of the clients who said that they could not manage, made requests. Of those who could manage, only about half made requests. In Milwaukee and Dane Counties, there was no relationship between being able to manage and making requests. About the same percentage of respondents made requests, regardless of whether or not they thought they were able to manage pretty well.

What do the welfare clients ask for? In Table 8 we have tabulated the percentage of the requests granted, and the percentage of all the respondents that had received money for these items.

More than half (56.2 per cent) of the requests made were for essential items: clothing, household goods, special food, and home necessities, as compared to requests that might be classified as rehabilitation or social service: day care, telephone, transportation, education, employment retraining, and school needs.

Table 8
Special Items Requested; Per Cent Granted

Items	Per Cent of Clients Requesting	Per Cent of Requests Granted	Per Cent of all Respondents Granted Special Items
Clothing	31.4	52.9	16.7
Household goods, including appliances	46.3	76.9	35.8
Day care help	10.3	82.3	8.6
Telephone	23.7	55.2	13.1
Transportation	20.8	73.6	15.4
Education or employment retraining	13.2	75.2	9.9
Extra or special food, including restaurant allowance	7.5	63.8	5.0
Extra for home necessities--utilities, rent, heat, etc.	24.8	68.4	17.0
School needs	17.9	65.0	11.7
Other	6.6	35.5	1.6
	(766)		(766)

The percentage of requests granted seems high; overall two-thirds of all requests for extra money to meet special needs were granted. For some items, such as day care help, it may be fairly assumed that no reasonable request was denied. However, despite a "good record" on granting requests, in fact few welfare clients benefited from the program because so few requests were made. With the exception of the third of all respondents who benefited from household goods, the proportions of welfare clients receiving extra grants were very small. Practically 90 per cent of the respondents received nothing extra for rehabilitative or social service needs. It would not be unfair to conclude that the special grants program is a paper program only. Welfare recipients existed primarily on their basic aid grants.

In Table 9 we have tabulated by county the percentage of clients requesting particular items, the percentage of the requests granted, and the percentage of respondents who had their requests granted.

Table 9

Special Grant Items Requested and Per Cent Granted by County

<u>Items</u>	<u>Milw.</u>	<u>Dane</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Walw.</u>	<u>Sauk</u>	<u>Dodge</u>	<u>Total</u>
Clothing							
% requested	43.0	36.3	16.3	17.5	15.8	12.9	31.4
% granted	50.0	69.2	42.9	42.9	33.3	25.0	52.9
% resp. granted	21.5	25.1	7.0	7.5	5.3	3.2	16.7
Household							
% requested	49.7	62.0	27.9	28.8	35.1	43.6	46.3
% granted	68.7	82.0	91.7	82.6	75.0	85.2	76.9
% resp. granted	34.1	50.8	25.6	23.8	26.3	37.1	35.8
Day care help							
% requested	14.9	11.7	8.2	1.2	3.6	4.8	10.3
% granted	80.0	90.5	85.7	100.0	50.0	50.0	82.3
% resp. granted	11.9	10.6	7.0	1.3	1.8	1.6	8.6
Telephone							
% requested	23.2	33.5	8.2	20.0	22.8	24.2	23.7
% granted	48.6	80.0	14.3	31.3	15.4	66.7	55.2
% resp. granted	11.3	26.8	1.2	6.3	3.5	16.1	13.1
Transportation							
% requested	22.2	27.4	8.1	10.1	14.0	32.2	20.8
% granted	76.1	83.7	71.4	62.5	50.0	55.0	73.6
% resp. granted	16.9	22.9	5.8	6.3	7.0	17.7	15.4
Education; employment							
% requested	14.9	20.1	9.3	5.0	3.6	9.7	13.2
% granted	68.9	86.1	75.0	50.0	50.0	83.3	75.2
% resp. granted	10.3	17.3	7.0	2.5	1.8	8.1	9.9
Special food							
% requested	9.0	9.5	9.3	1.2	5.3	3.2	7.5
% granted	66.7	70.6	62.5	0.0	66.7	0.0	63.8
% resp. granted	6.0	6.7	5.8	0.0	3.5	0.0	5.0
Home necessities							
% requested	27.5	27.4	19.8	12.6	28.0	24.2	24.8
% granted	65.1	83.7	64.7	70.0	62.5	46.7	68.4
% resp. granted	17.9	22.9	12.8	8.8	17.5	11.3	17.0
School needs							
% requested	20.5	12.3	19.8	20.1	15.8	17.8	17.9
% granted	67.7	63.6	64.7	81.3	44.4	45.5	65.0
% resp. granted	<u>13.9</u>	<u>7.8</u>	<u>12.8</u>	<u>16.3</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>8.5</u>	<u>11.7</u>
	(302)	(179)	(86)	(80)	(57)	(62)	(766)

The results in Table 9 would seem to indicate real differences in county administration. For example, with household items, almost two-thirds of the Dane County recipients have asked for the special grants, and half of the recipients have received a special grant for these items. Even though the granting of request rate is high for the other counties, the difference in results (clients receiving money) lies in the proportions of clients making requests. Clients have to be aware of the availability of this resource, and ought not to be discouraged from making the requests. For most items in Table 9, the rural counties and Brown County were behind Dane and Milwaukee Counties in proportions of clients making requests. A request must be based on need--a client is not likely to request a special grant for an item unless she needs it. But although we have no data on actual needs, it seems highly unlikely that the differences in clients requesting items were based on differences in actual need. Twenty-five per cent of the Dane County recipients had received extra money for clothing as compared to seven per cent of the Brown County recipients; for telephones, the percentages receiving money were 26.8 in Dane compared to 1.2 in Brown, for transportation, 22.9 to 5.8, and so on. In several of the counties for many items, the proportion of recipients actually receiving money was so small, it may fairly be said that the availability of special grants is meaningless.

Because two-thirds of all requests were granted, it is not surprising that the welfare recipients who made requests also thought that the caseworkers were either usually or always fair "in granting or refusing requests." The only county proving the exception was Sauk County, where more "unfairness" was felt.

Table 10

Attitudes towards Caseworker Handling of Requests for Special Grants*

Is Caseworker Fair?	Milw.	Dane	Brown	Walw.	Sauk	Dodge	Total
Always fair	23.1%	45.6%	46.7%	21.4%	7.1%	29.4%	31.0%
Usually fair	48.4	46.9	37.8	64.3	67.9	44.1	49.0
Usually unfair	16.9	3.4	6.7	9.5	21.4	20.6	12.3
Always unfair	10.2	.7	8.9	2.4	3.6	2.9	6.1
NA	1.3	3.4	0.0	2.4	0.0	2.9	1.9
	(225)	(147)	(45)	(42)	(28)	(34)	(521)

* Percentages are of only those who made requests.

A third of the respondents did not ask for special grants. In Table 11 we have tabulated their reasons.

Table 11

Reasons why Respondents did not ask for Special Grants

	% of Those Not Asking	% of Entire Sample
Didn't know about program	12.3	3.8
Had no occasion; grant is ample	35.3	10.8
Determined to get by on basic grant	27.2	8.4
Feels agency would refuse	21.3	6.5
Hostility towards AFDC program	1.7	.5
NA	2.1	.7
	(235)	(766)

For about a third of those who had not asked, the fault would appear to lie with local administration; the respondent either did not know about the program (12.3 per cent) or felt that the agency would refuse (21.3 per cent). It could also be argued--we think persuasively--that fault also lies with county administration for at least part of 27.2 per cent who did not ask because they were determined to get by on the basic grant. This may be a misdirected sense of independence and one contrary to the intentions of state policy, as set forth in the Manual. The special grants program is for needs that either have nothing to do with personal qualities of independence (e.g., special food, extra clothing) or are designed to encourage independence (e.g., employment re-training). In other words, it should be the job of the

caseworkers to encourage clients to make better use of the program.

Reasons for the lack of this program's use are probably more subtle than portrayed in the literature as evidenced by the data in Table 11, as well as the other data on special grants. There is little indication of complete ignorance on the part of the clients; only 3.8 per cent of all the respondents said they didn't ask because they didn't know about the program. Also, only 6.5 per cent said they thought the agency would refuse, and less than one per cent were so hostile to the program that they didn't want to ask anything more of it than they had to. On the other hand, there is greater evidence that the purpose of the special grant program was never really explained, or understood by the clients. Most of the respondents did know about the program; they did request at least once; the request was usually granted; and they thought that the caseworker decisions were fair. Unfortunately, we did not ask the respondents why they didn't ask for additional items. Perhaps they thought they would be refused, or were discouraged from making more than one or two requests.

For most of the respondents, administration of the budget was very passive. Aid grant changes and special requests were infrequent. For a small number, however, there was more direct regulation; 7.7 per cent of the respondents said that at one time or another the caseworkers had expressed disapproval of the way they spent their money. (The caseworkers expressed disapproval twice, on the average). Poor budgeting, spending too much for clothing or food, buying "extras" such as toys, treats or bicycles for children, and buying "extras" for oneself were some practices of which caseworkers disapproved.

When regulation began to bite, as with specific caseworker disapproval, client attitudes reflected it in a much higher proportion of

expressing negative or hostile feelings. In Table 12 we compared attitudes toward general budget discussions and attitudes toward caseworker disapproval.

Table 12

Client Attitudes Toward Budget Discussions and Caseworker Disapproval*

	<u>Budget Discussion</u>	<u>Caseworker Disapproval</u>
Discussions helpful?		
Very	23.6%	3.4%
Usually	18.2	18.6
Somewhat	32.1	16.9
Not at all	<u>25.7</u> (561)	<u>61.0</u> (59)
Bothered or annoyed		
Very much	6.5%	35.6%
Moderately	5.4	15.3
Slightly	1.1	15.3
Not at all	<u>77.1</u> (558)	<u>33.9</u> (59)

* Percentages apply to those reporting discussions.

Although the group experiencing caseworker disapproval resented regulation, 31 per cent felt that they had to follow their caseworker's advice "most of the time" and another 10 per cent said that they had to do so "all of the time." More positive client feelings toward general budget discussions may not indicate client agreement with what the caseworker wants. They may simply indicate a lack of active caseworker regulation, or that the budget discussions were casual and indifferent.

Conclusions:

Though data in this paper do not reach all of the criticisms made against the administration of AFDC budgets, nevertheless, a pattern emerges which does qualify if not refute some of the criticisms.

The static nature of the money payments and supplements is the dominant feature of the administration of AFDC budgets. Basic budgets are relatively stable, with only one grant change per year, and with clients making only one special request per year. In general, our evidence indicates that most clients receive the same size check month after month. This allows an element of predictability but, conversely, there is little flexibility in income maintenance. Clients do not ask for much and do not get much. Despite the low levels of budgets and the slight impact of provisions for special needs, clients generally say that they are able to manage on their budgets. Even so, when asked about the bad points of the AFDC program, respondents were far more likely to complain of the inadequacy of grants than of any other feature.

On the evidence in this paper, our conclusion must be that the system of special grants is functioning very poorly. Although county administration is liberal in granting requests, very few clients ask for special grants. Unless one assumes that need does not exist, it would appear that there is not adequate communication about this program. Some state authorities have emphasized that the program is, after all, one of Special Needs, emphasizing the word Special and implying that many people would not have such needs. This seems a rather curious emphasis since clothing, housekeeping necessities, and utilities are all a part of the special needs program.

The other outstanding finding of this paper is the absence of regulation and frequent client-caseworker interaction about budgets, which is the opposite of what is charged. Client attitudes toward the caseworkers in the administration of budgets are generally quite positive-- they do not usually report feelings of coercion. We did find that as

clients made more special requests or experienced more frequent changes in their basic aid grant, they were more likely to encounter caseworker disapproval of the way they handled money. This is not surprising; if budgets become topics for discussion more often, some conflict or regulation is more likely. But it should be remembered that for most clients the level of administrative, and therefore regulative, activity is very low indeed. This would suggest that one of the prices for little caseworker supervision or disapproval may have been the very low level of activity, or lack of responsiveness and flexibility of the system. Under the present structural arrangements, it is indeed possible that a more flexible, responsive system for handling money disbursement would result in the very thing which is anathema to the critics of the present system: a more coercive relationship between caseworker and client.