

The data were collected through a multi-state study approved by the US Department of Agricultural Experiment Station System and known as NC-1011 (formerly NC-223 from 1998-2003). In addition to each state's private and public sector support, funds were awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture National Research Initiative Competitive Grant Program (Grants 2001-35401-10215 & 2002-35401-11591, 2004-35401-14938, J.W. Bauer, PI).

We thank the mothers who shared information and perspectives about their lives, and who gave their time and their permission for us to return to interview them. We have promised to share with others the daily lives of mothers living in rural areas and their situations as the context around them changes. Without the cooperation of the families, this project would not be possible.



CA
Dr. Karen Varcoe, Karen.varcoe@ucr.edu

IA
Dr. Steven Garasky, sgarasky@iastate.edu

KY
Dr. Patricia Hyjer Dyk, pdyk@uky.edu

LA
Dr. Frances Lawrence, flawrence@agctr.lsu.edu

MD
Dr. Bonnie Braun, bbraun@umd.edu

MA
Dr. Sheila Mammen, smammen@resecon.umass.edu

MI
Dr. Barbara Ames, ames@msu.edu

MN
Dr. Jean Bauer, jbauer@umn.edu

NE
Dr. Susan Churchill, schurchill2@unl.edu

NH
Dr. Elizabeth Dolan, e.dolan@unh.edu

NY
Dr. Christine Olson, cmo3@cornell.edu

NC
Dr. Carolyn Bird, Carolyn_bird@ncsu.edu

OH
Dr. Sharon Seiling, seiling.1@osu.edu

OR
Dr. Leslie Richards, leslie.richards@oregonstate.edu

SD
Dr. Donna Hess, Donna_Hess@sdstate.edu

TN
Dr. Ann Berry, aaberry@utk.edu

WV
Dr. Margaret Manoogian, manoogia@ohio.edu

RURAL LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



Tracking their Well-Being and Function in an Era of Welfare Reform

A Multi-State Research Project

Purpose

Selected Key Findings

Policy Recommendations

This 16 state research project, begun in 2000, studies change in the well-being and functioning of more than 500 rural families in the context of policies that reform welfare and other public assistance.

Issues examined include:

Health

Food Security

Economic Resources

Child Care

Transportation

Employment & Training

Education

Social Support

Family Strengths

Parenting

Community Context

Local Labor Market

Health & Food Insecurity

Physical health is characterized by a high number and severity of chronic physical conditions.

Mental health issues are prevalent with reports of depression in the mother.

Families have difficulty paying for medical care and accessing dental care.

Forty percent of families did not have ready, steady access to sufficient nutritious food for an active and healthy life.

Mothers with high levels of food and financial life skills are protected against food insecurity.

Economic Status

Many adults in rural families are employed, but even those families with two earners are often not able to be self-sufficient.

The presence of an employed husband or partner doesn't lift all of these families out of poverty.

Child support is not a large or dependable source of income.

Many rural low-income families have difficulties making ends meet. They tend to rely more heavily on extended family than on government for support.

Policy-makers desiring to improve the quality of life in Rural America need to:

Address the broad issue of poverty among rural families—not just those on TANF.

Endorse measures aimed at closing the gaps in meeting basic needs when income is inadequate.

Improve access to and affordability of rural health care services.

Promote food security by ensuring the availability and accessibility of services, especially for families facing mental health and physical disability challenges.

Continue funding for nutrition education targeting low-income rural families, e.g., USDA Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and USDA Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE), to improve life skills, reduce obesity, and connect families with appropriate services.

Encourage flexibility in use of federal and state funds to develop resources to support low-income and working-poor families.

Support efforts of the DHHS to implement strategies identified in their 2002 study
www.ruralhealth.hrsa.gov/PublicReport.htm