

# FAMILIES IN SOCIETY

*The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*



*The Ultimate Agency Advantage*

for immediate release

contact: Jan Thomas  
414 359 1040 X-3612  
jthomas@alliance1.org

## **America's working poor: Too many work hard but can't get ahead** *Social services journal Families in Society examines families mired in poverty*

MILWAUKEE, Aug. 22, 2007 — Many low-income working individuals and families increasingly confront significant challenges in their ability to remain economically self-sufficient. A substantial portion of these individuals, referred to as "working but poor," or "the working poor," rotate in and out of social service agencies seeking assistance in coping with everyday challenges emerging from insufficient social and/or financial capital.

*Families in Society*, a scholarly journal for social services and health professionals, has released a special issue, *Working But Poor: Next Steps for Social Work Strategies and Collaborations*. The journal, published by the Alliance for Children and Families, spotlights and investigates the growing proportion of American society for whom productive work does not predictably enhance economic position.

Across the United States, increasing numbers of families have made the transition from welfare to work only to find themselves in an economic cycle that keeps them from getting ahead. Often, these working parents enter the workforce at low pay levels in industries that churn employees through ongoing layoffs and reductions, keeping them from earning sorely needed benefits and preventing them from increasing their earnings.

Even those who acquire positions that bring income growth, pay increases almost always raise them above thresholds for their remaining public assistance. When a small pay raise results in a larger reduction in eligible assistance, the result is a net economic loss.

While public attention focuses on the wealth of the few, too many Americans remain in poverty — and, despite our overall affluence — the figure is rising, not falling. In many cities, the figures are disturbing. For example, the National Urban League Institute reports that the number of poor in America rose by 1.1 million from 2003 to 2004. An estimated 37 million Americans live in poverty; 13 million of those are children.

The Urban League study shows that, in Detroit, more than one-third of the population lives in poverty; nearly half of the city's children are among those poor. In Atlanta, more than one-fourth of the entire population and nearly half of children live in poverty.

### **Understanding can generate solutions**

*Working But Poor* (Vol. 88, No. 3—July-Sept. 2007) addresses the context of the working poor across five important areas of focus:

1. Constructs of poverty and demographics of the working poor
2. Critical issues in welfare reform and work readiness
3. Economic policies as barriers to self-sufficiency
4. Building financial stability
5. Innovations through public and private partnerships

—more—

"These elements speak eloquently to much of what concerns us in the human services sector," notes Peter Goldberg, president and CEO of the Alliance for Children and Families. "In strategic programming, day-to-day practice, research and analysis, or public policy and advocacy, this is an issue our society must address. This is a must-read publication for researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers concerned with the well-being of the American family."

There are 25 articles, commentaries, and reviews included in this expanded issue of the journal. As a thoroughly researched and peer-reviewed journal, *Families in Society* presents a balanced view of this key subject. The publication — available in print, CD-ROM, and online — represents the largest single edition of the journal ever produced in its 88 years of publication. Additional follow-up features will appear in future issues, creating an ongoing series focused on the working poor.

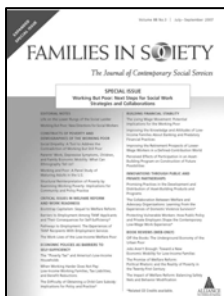
Dr. William Powell, *Families in Society* editor, adds, "This special edition illuminates a vital aspect of the struggle of those who strive for the American dream but find it remains out of their grasp. Our authors examine a wide range of factors that present barriers to those struggling to transition from subsidies and support to self-sufficiency and — significantly — presents detailed reports on possible solutions to the frustrations embodied in the 'one step forward, two steps back' system that faces many welfare-to-work families."

Special guest editor, Dr. Sondra J. Fogel of University of South Florida, notes, "This issue, like all issues of *Families in Society*, is put out with the belief that good intentions, reliable knowledge, and new insights can inspire innovative approaches in our work and our social policy. The information can be used to increase our understanding of the benefits of attending to the common good and the fine line between self-sufficiency and dependency in our society. We urge everyone to consider the human costs of the increasing social divide between those that have, those among the working poor, and those in even more pervasive poverty."

Founded in 1920, *Families in Society* is the oldest social work journal in North America and continues to be an important source of expert information for academics as well as practitioners in social work. The Alliance for Children and Families provides an in-house editorial and support staff which publishes the quarterly print journal, comprehensive Web site, and online continuing education program for the social services community.

The Alliance for Children and Families is the nation's largest association of private, nonprofit human service agencies and organizations. Its mission is to build the capacity of its members to serve and advocate for children, families and communities. Its members annually serve more than 3.4 million people with a wide array of programs and services. The Alliance is headquartered in Milwaukee.

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**Editor's notes:**

- **For additional information on *Working But Poor*, please visit [www.familiesinsociety.org/new/workingpoor.htm](http://www.familiesinsociety.org/new/workingpoor.htm)**