

A Comparative State Analysis of the Performance of AFDC Program in the United States

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Abstract

The AFDC programs was created during a period of economic chaos and is administered by the states under widely disparate standards of access and benefit levels. In attempting to protect the interests of the States, however, Congress created a decentralized system for the provision of aid to needy children. As a result, the states receive federal funding in support of programs but retain significant discretion in shaping state programs. Having the wide discrepancies that exist in different states, the availability of AFDC to poor children and the level of benefits were released differently across states.

The purposes of this study are to measure the performances of AFDC programs and to analyze the determinants of AFDC dynamics across states. Firstly, indicators will be constructed from the framework of system analysis which comprises three perspectives, *i.e.*, input, transition, and output respectively. Secondly, the specific state-level data on AFDC program and environmental variables of each state, for example, the per capita income of each state which could have effects on AFDC program, will be collected and comprised in the measuring indicators. Thirdly, statistical methods, cluster analysis and factor analysis, will be utilized to examine and grade the performance of AFDC program among different states. Fourthly, by analyzing the linkages between state-level data on the AFDC program and state's environmental variables, it will help us to find out and explain the factors that cause the different performances of AFDC program among states. The findings of this study will provide the decision-makers and practioners important implications for understanding the structure and evolution of social welfare policies in the American states.