

# NETWORK EDUCATION PROGRAM

Partners with NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

## TANF Tested: Lives of Families in Poverty during the Recession

### Reflection Questions for Classroom, Community, and individual Use

#### Introduction

- Does anything surprise you about the demographics of NETWORK's TANF Watch Project survey (gender, age, marital status, etc.)? If so, why?
- *An illustration of income: How far \$6,000 will go.* Say you are a family of two—one adult and one dependant, with monthly expenditures as follows: rent is \$200/month, groceries are \$150/month, and utilities cost \$100/month. What is left over for child care, transportation, household items, clothes, etc? Do you or could you live off of this income?

#### Chapter 1 – Project History

- What are some of the similarities that you see between the survey findings from each year? Why do you think this trend exists?
- What are some of the differences that you see between the survey findings from each year? What has changed?

#### Chapter 2 – Employment

- After reading through this section, how effective do you believe the TANF program is about promoting the “Work First” agenda for TANF Watch Respondents?
- Among TANF Watch participants who found jobs while receiving TANF benefits, 26% reported that they lost their child care benefits. How might this affect their ability to work?

#### Chapter 3 – Increased Hunger

- In what ways do hunger and/or insecurity about food resources affect someone's life?
- In seeing how non-profits in the TANF Watch Study have risen to meet increased need during the recession, what do you believe is the role of non-profits and social service agencies in the national scale of providing a safety net for society? What should be the role of government?

#### Chapter 4 – Education

- What does education provide that gives people more opportunities?
- What issues do people with less education in the TANF Watch Project experience? Why?

#### Chapter 5 – Barriers

- What are some of the barriers that respondents faced to finding employment?
- How has the recent recession affected men? What in the TANF Watch Project data reflects the challenges that men currently face to getting and maintaining employment?

#### Overall

- How might these findings echo what is happening in your community?
- The old stereotype of “Welfare” conjures the image of a program that provides unlimited funds for “Welfare Queens”: unmarried women with multiple children who lazily receive tax dollars from other hardworking citizens. Yet this stereotype was never accurate, and the 1996 legislation made sweeping changes to the program. What stereotypes do you now hear about TANF or “Welfare”? How are they similar to or different from the old stereotype? How do the respondents within this report shed light on a different reality?