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Welfare Caseloads Increase in 26 States and DC Between June and September 2003

Flat National Welfare Caseload Contrasts with Rising Food Stamp Caseload

(Washington, DC) — Between June and September 2003, 26 states and the District of Columbia reported welfare caseload increases, while 24 states reported decreases, according to new data collected by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Overall, the national caseload remained essentially flat, declining by 0.1 percent between June and September 2003. Over the past year (September 2002-September 2003), the national caseload increased by 0.4 percent, and 30 states had caseload increases.

CLASP has collected this new data on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseloads through September 2003 from 50 states and the District of Columbia. These are the most current and complete data available.

Most states are experiencing relatively small caseload changes each quarter. In the most recent quarter, between June and September 2003, 34 states saw their caseloads change by less than 3 percent. Three states (Missouri, New Mexico, and Virginia) saw their caseloads rise by more than 5 percent, and five states (Alaska, Montana, Nevada, Texas, and Utah) saw their caseloads decline by more than 5 percent.

The new analysis from CLASP notes the sharp contrast between flattening welfare caseloads and rising food stamp caseloads between 2001 and 2003. Between September 2001 and September 2003, the number of households participating in the Food Stamp Program increased by 2,064,112, while the number of families receiving TANF fell by 62,239.

“The welfare caseload story continues to be a mixed one,” said Mark Greenberg, CLASP Policy Director and co-author of the analysis. “The biggest puzzle is still why welfare caseloads for much of the country have stayed essentially flat or declined at a time when unemployment grew and the food stamp caseload grew.”

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To view the new data and CLASP’s analysis, visit http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/Pubs_New. To set up an interview with Mark Greenberg or another CLASP expert, contact John Hutchins at (202) 906-8013.

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A national, nonprofit organization founded in 1968, CLASP conducts research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and advocacy on issues related to economic security of low-income families with children.