

Reform of the Welfare System - 1994

We are mandated as Jews to care for the poor and needy (Lev. 10). Further, we are taught by Moses Maimonides that the highest degree of tzedakah is to provide employment that enables people to be self-supporting (Mishneh Torah). The current United States welfare system, as it affects families with children, is based on intervention as a response to emergencies. Its focus on maintaining the status quo as a condition of continuing eligibility and the need of recipients to retain access to health care serve all too often to establish welfare as a way of life rather than as an effective means of transition from poverty and dependence to self-support.

The Board of Directors of Women of Reform Judaism, recognizes the enormity of the subject and its many aspects. Until such time that a further statement may be developed we support a United States welfare reform initiative that is based on goals of self-sufficiency and family stability, that assures comprehensive health care, that is respectful of those whose needs must be served and that is non-punitive toward those who fail to achieve established goals or who require more than a single opportunity to change their lives.