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WOMEN WORK!
The National Network for Women's Employment

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Ten Years of TANF, No Cause for Celebration

WASHINGTON, DC — Ten years after the creation of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the program has failed to reach children and families living in the deepest poverty. On this TANF anniversary, Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment advocates that the Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) revise program regulations to encourage states to devote resources to education and training—the tools that have been proven most successful at bringing families out of poverty.

“In the past 10 years, the number of families receiving TANF has decreased, but this is not the whole story,” explained Jill Miller, Women Work! President and CEO. “Because the program discourages opportunities for educational development, many former welfare recipients are stuck in low-skill, low-wage jobs. They have left TANF only to join the ranks of the working poor.”

Though often cited as “evidence” of welfare reform's success, the fact that fewer people are receiving assistance from TANF does not mean that the program is adequately addressing America's poverty problem. Between 2000 and 2004, decreases in the number of children receiving TANF were accompanied by an increase in the number of American children living in families with incomes below half of the poverty line. Since 1996, there are increasing numbers of poor single mothers who are unemployed and not receiving cash public assistance. Even those single mothers who do receive TANF are likely to remain poor or near poor after the program.

“As a network of organizations that serves 300,000 women a year, Women Work! knows that when you give women access to education and job training, they get the jobs they need to pull themselves and their families out of poverty,” said Miller. “We strongly urge HHS to create TANF regulations that will actually help all American families achieve self-sufficiency.”

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Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advances economic justice and equality for women through education, advocacy and organizing. Since 1978, the Network has assisted more than 10 million women to successfully enter, re-enter and advance in the workforce. Through supporting, advocating and increasing women's economic self-sufficiency, Women Work! members strengthen families and communities. For more information about Women Work! visit: www.womenwork.org.