



Drug Testing: A Solution Looking for a Problem

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Michigan is currently contemplating creating a drug-testing policy for recipients of cash assistance. This policy is based on the myth of widespread drug use among the cash assistance population, which is not supported by any research. The costs to implement such a test are astronomical, and there are serious constitutional issues with requiring those who receive cash assistance to submit to a drug test.

Drug testing policies are very expensive and not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services analyzed the cost of drug tests among 12 states that have a drug-screening program. Not one of the state estimates for the cost of a drug-screening program showed a net savings.

People do not stay on cash assistance for long periods of time.

- Two-thirds of Michiganians who receive FIP are on the program for 12 months or less.
- The FIP caseload has dropped 42 percent between FY 2001 and FY 2012.

Substance abuse does not have a determinable effect on the employability of an individual.

- Sixty-six percent of those with drug dependence or who abused alcohol were employed part or full time.
- A study commissioned in Florida found very little difference in employment and earnings between those who tested positive for drugs and those who tested negative in a work support program.

A punitive drug testing policy does not help anyone.

- Seventy percent of the FIP caseload are children.
- Withdrawing all support from an individual with a substance abuse problem will only impede their path to recovery.

FIP makes up less than 4 percent of the total General Fund budget but is the only program being targeted for drug testing.

- The entire appropriation to the FIP program for FY 2012 was \$340 million. The state currently has almost \$30 billion committed to more than 11,000 contracts, none of which has drug-testing requirements.

Drug Testing Policies Are Based on Myths

Evidence of widespread drug use among cash assistance recipients does not exist as studies rarely find significantly greater substance abuse among recipients than that of the general population.

Drug testing cash assistance recipients is not the same as employer drug testing.

- The constitution protects Americans from government intrusion, not from the intrusion of private companies where someone is seeking employment.
- People who apply for temporary government assistance should not have less

constitutional protection than other Americans.

FIP already has built-in mechanisms that discourage drug use.

- Recipients must participate in work-related activities for 30-40 hours a week.
- The maximum monthly benefit a family of three can receive is \$492 a month, only one-third of the federal poverty level.