

## What's it like to live on welfare?

Find out in a **WELFARE SIMULATION**, a three-hour "hands-on," active learning experience about what it means to live on welfare.

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### What is a Welfare Simulation?

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#### Overview:

A Welfare Simulation is a three-hour experiential learning workshop in which participants are sensitized to the realities of living in poverty. It is a copyrighted learning tool created and presented by ROWEL (Reform Organization of Welfare) in the late 1970's.

#### Program:

In a Welfare Simulation, 35-75 participants are given scripted role assignments and structured situations to resemble those that welfare recipients face daily. Participants experience specific realistic challenges based on their assigned roles as low-income people of various backgrounds and family structures. At the start of the simulation, each "family" is given information about itself: some are newly unemployed or have been deserted by the family "breadwinner;" others have been receiving welfare benefits either with or without additional earned income; others receive disability income, some are elderly, and some include small children.

Volunteer "staff" create a "community" with stores and agencies in which participants interact for four 15-minute weeks. "Staff" volunteers serve as welfare office workers, grocers, pawnbrokers, food pantry personnel, bill collectors, police, employment interviewers, and others.

#### Reflection:

After the "month on welfare" (one hour), the facilitator leads a discussion based on participants' experiences in the simulation. Volunteer "staff" share their insights, and the facilitator offers suggestions for how participants can take action to promote justice for those living in a real "state of poverty."

#### Cost:

The standard cost for the simulation is \$700 (somewhat negotiable). This price covers the cost of materials, staff time, and stipends for low-income volunteers who offer invaluable first-hand experience with the welfare system.

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### What You Can Expect...

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#### Learn how hard it is to...

- ◆ Feed your family
- ◆ Pay your bills
- ◆ Find employment
- ◆ Find childcare
- ◆ Complete administrative requirements
- ◆ Keep your kids out of trouble
- ◆ Make quality family time

...while living on welfare.

#### Learn what it's like to deal with...

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| The landlord                 | The Police              |
| The local food bank          | The Welfare Office      |
| The Quick Cash Store         | A Childcare Provider    |
| The Utilities Payment Office | A Welfare Rights Office |
| A pawnbroker                 | Legal Services          |

...while living on welfare.



*Interfaith Council  
for Peace & Justice*

The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ) offers the Welfare Simulation in partnership with the local Welfare Rights Organization.

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