

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

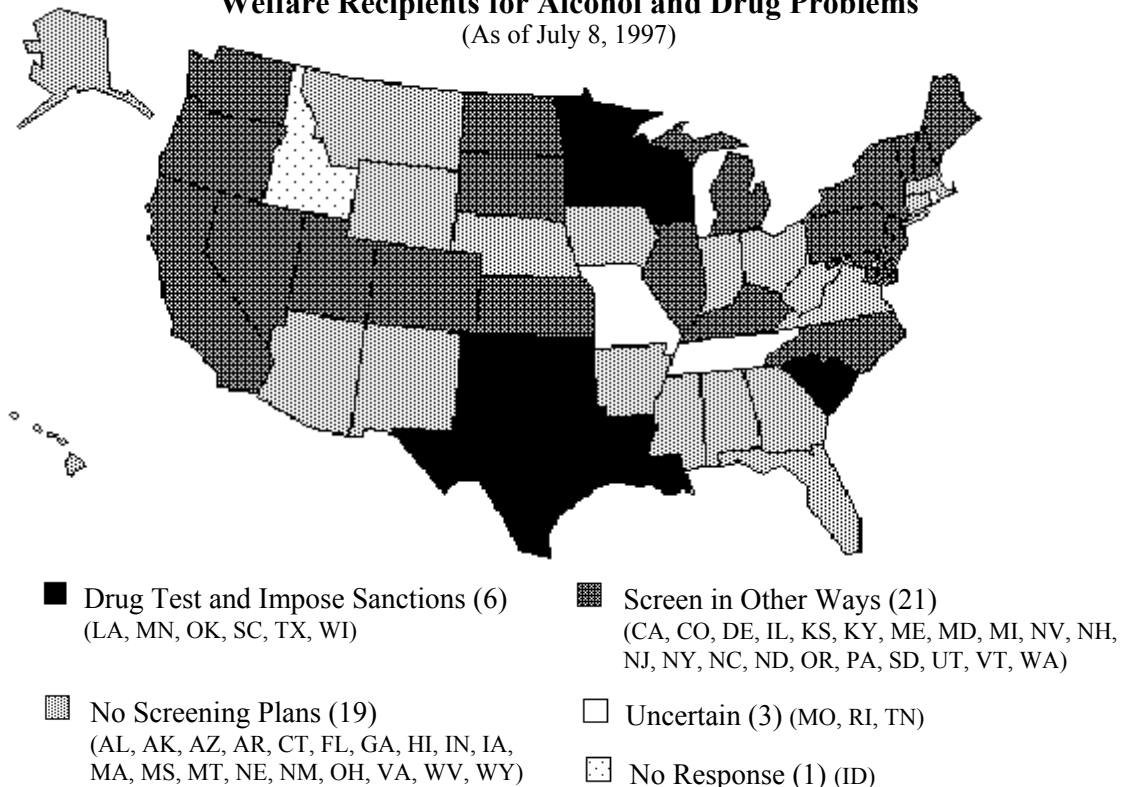
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More Than Half of States Plan to Screen Welfare Recipients for Alcohol and Other Drug Use

In 1996 the federal government passed welfare reform legislation that, among other things, authorized states to test welfare recipients for illegal drug use and sanction them if they test positive. A recent survey of state welfare directors and state alcohol and drug abuse directors found that more than one-half of the states have passed or plan to pass legislation to screen welfare recipients for alcohol and other drug problems. Of the 27 states, 6 will require urine drug testing of some or all of their welfare recipients and impose sanctions for a positive test. Twenty-one states will screen welfare recipients in other ways, most often using traditional screening tools. For example, Maryland welfare applicants and recipients will be screened with a modified CAGE instrument, a short questionnaire effective in detecting alcoholism. **In light of the research showing underreporting of illicit drug use among disadvantaged populations, CESAR recommends that states utilize drug testing to identify users.**

How States Will or Plan to Drug Test or Otherwise Screen Welfare Recipients for Alcohol and Drug Problems

(As of July 8, 1997)



SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from the Legal Action Center, "Making Welfare Reform Work: Tools for Confronting Alcohol and Drug Problems Among Welfare Recipients," September 1997. For more information, contact the Legal Action Center at 212-243-1313 (NY office), 202-544-5478 (DC office), or lacinfo@lac.org (e-mail).