Use of Public Transfer Programs and Private Aid by Farm Workers

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Legal status affects the use of public welfare and insurance and private assistance programs by families of farm workers. Families of unauthorized immigrants are more likely to use public medical assistance and less likely to use other public transfer programs than authorized immigrants and citizens. Unauthorized immigrants with young children in the United States are slightly more likely to use welfare, and welfare recipients are slightly more likely to have young children here.

WE EXAMINE HOW USE OF public welfare and social insurance programs and private aid supplied by charities, churches, or communities depends on legal status among agricultural workers. We also investigate the extent to which the decision of unauthorized workers to have a child in the United States is influenced by welfare considerations.

We consider four legal-status groups. Three of these groups may work legally in the United States: U.S. citizens, immigrants granted amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), and immigrants who were permanent residents ("green card" holders) or who

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