

Daily News letters

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Learn a little about welfare before throwing all recipients to the wolves

In response to Bill Davis' Feb. 26 letter ("Welfare recipients should not get Permanent Fund dividend checks"):

It's critical to have a car for interviews and to travel to jobs. Medicaid will not assist with dental care for those over 18 years old unless teeth are removed or filled. For anyone over 18 with an eye problem, their only hope is the Permanent Fund dividend. Clothing and shelter are needed too.

I earned my social work degree at the University of Alaska Anchorage while on welfare, to make an independent life for myself. I am physically disabled, and I knew education would open the door to employment. I bought eyeglasses, a cheap car, paid rent, paid utilities, paid tuition and purchased school books.

The 1996 welfare reform law, called "welfare to work," limits welfare to five years. Welfare in Alaska is called ATAP (Alaska Temporary Assistance Program). The former welfare office is filled with computers tuned to job service, job training, skills testing, resume instruction and employment seminars. Now the sign on the front of the office says "Jobs." Check out the Program Leaver Study on the state public assistance Web site. This study shows the majority of families reaching for self-sufficiency. The dividend can mean getting on your feet in the darkest hour for those on welfare.

Mr. Davis should investigate this more before making judgments as to who should get a dividend.

---- Marcella Beaumont