Laney Unit 6 Government Assistance Case Studies

"Government Assistance Case Studies"

Instructions: Below, you will be reading and analyzing three different situations of people/families obtaining economic assistance from the Government. There are three sections below that you will be completing in groups of 3 (each of you assigning one another a single section to focus on). You will use the expense statement for each family to help answer questions. As you read and analyze the document you should be creating a bubble map to help analyze the document. **NOTE:** Be sure to read these documents first, starting with the "Life" story and then looking over the "Income and Expense Statement." Discuss and Share with your partners. Each student should turn in a completed case study sheet and thinking maps for each.

Laura's Story Reflection

Directions: Read *Laura's Life* scenario and *Income and Expense Statement for Laura*. Then use those documents to help you answer the following questions:.

1. After reading Laura's story, what are the three events that have shaped Laura's life?

2. In Laura's story, what government programs has Laura receives or has received support for in the past. Then explain how each government program supports Laura.

3. While Laura was in college, how much government income was Laura receiving?

4. How did the Social Security "Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)" benefits allow Laura to "Invest in herself"?

5. How did living at home while in college help Laura financially?

6. How much better off is Laura financially now that she has her college degree and a full-time job compared to when she was receiving Social Security benefits?

7. Identify three changes in Laura's spending and lifestyle as a result of her current higher income.

Calvin's Story Reflection

Directions: Reading *Calvin's Story* scenario and *Income and Expense Statement for Clavin*. Then use those documents to help answer the following questions:.

1. Questions about Calvin's Income and Expense Statement.
    a. What is Calvin's total monthly income before his job?
    b. What is Calvin's total monthly income after he gets a job (not including the Earned Income Credit he receives at the end of the year)?
    c. When Calvin takes a job, how much do his TANF and SNAP benefits decrease?
    d. Is Calving better off financially with or without a job? By how much?
    e. When Calvin takes a job, his income goes up, but so do some of his monthly expenses. Which expenses go up and by how much? Is he still better off working rather than staying at home and relying only on his public benefits?
    f. Why does Calvin get such a large amount in May from the Earned Income Tax Credit? Will he get this every month? What did he do with his money?
2. According to the story, Calvin and his parents no longer have a positive relationship, and it appears they have not communicated since he left home after high school. In what ways would his situation be different if he were able to depend on family? Give a few examples of how a family network could support adults in situations similar to Calvin's.
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Swenson Family Reflection

Directions: Read the *Swenson Family* scenario and *Income and Expense Statement for the Swenson Family*. Then use those documents to help answer the following questions.

1. The Swenson family's spending plan was significantly different in September, when Choe's father was employed, compared to in January, when he was still seeking employment. Analyze the family's spending choices:
    a. Even when unemployed, the family chose to keep all of their existing forms of insurance. Why do you believe they did this?

    b. The family had to decrease many of their expenses due to the father's unemployment. Which decreased expense do you believe was the most difficult for the family to adjust to, and why?

2. The Swenson family was fortunate that Chole's father worked in a job that allowed him to claim unemployment after he was laid off. Consider the following:
    a. If the family did not have the $1,863 in unemployment income, what additional changes would they have had to make to their income and expense statement? Identify what impact these changes would have had on the family.

    b. Although Chloe's father received unemployment, he was actively seeking new employment. Why?

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Modified Reading Laura's Story

My name is Laura. I am a special education teacher and a wheelchair racer. I have spina bifida (SB). This means when I was born, my spine was not fully formed and the nerves in my body do not work the way they should. Because of SB, I have had many surgeries, even now at age 22, to help my kidney problems. These problems are caused by spina bifida. Life has been hard sometimes, but I am proud of what I have achieved even though I have physical disabilities.

I grew up in a small Midwestern town. My dad worked as an aviation mechanic until he died from colon cancer when I was 18. Since then, my mom and I have helped each other in every way we can: physically, emotionally, and with money.

Some people might think my life is very hard, but I have been able to do many great things. I use a wheelchair all the time, but I have an exciting job, wonderful friends, and even medals from wheelchair races I have entered.

When I was 10, I watched my dad run a marathon. It was the first time I saw athletes using push rim wheelchairs, and I decided I wanted to race too. The doctors my mom works with raised money for me to buy my racing wheelchair. Now, my biggest goal is to run a marathon and qualify for the Boston Marathon. I race as often as I can, but races are expensive, so I do fewer each year.

When my dad got sick, I started working part-time in high school. My counselor helped me find a job as a classroom aid for children with disabilities. That is when I decided I wanted to be a special education teacher for kids who have physical disabilities, just like me.

After my dad died, I was able to get money from the government because of my disability and my dad's work record. I received Childhood Disability Benefit (CDB) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which gave me extra money and allowed me to get health insurance through Medicare and Medicaid.

A counselor helped me join a Social Security program called Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS). It helped me go to college and keep getting money from SSI to pay for school costs. I finished most of my college schoolwork at night and on weekends, which let me keep working at the elementary school.

Six months ago, I graduated from college with a degree in Special Education and got my first full-time job teaching. I earn $33,830 a year and send money to my mom to help with bills. I live with a friend in an old factory building now turned into apartments. I pay $825 per month for rent and utilities. I use a free ride program for people with disabilities. Even though I no longer get money from Social Security, I still have health insurance from Medicaid and Medicare, which is worth over $15,000 each year and is not taxed. I am living the advice I give to my students: "The best way to predict your future is to create it!"

Key Vocabulary

- Spina bifida (SB): A birth condition where the spine does not form properly, often causing nerve problems and physical disabilities.
- Wheelchair racer: An athlete who uses a wheelchair designed for racing in running events.
- Chronic: Long-term and ongoing.
- Aviation mechanic: A person who repairs and maintains airplanes.
- Medals: Awards won in competitions.
- Marathon: A long running race, about 26 miles (42 kilometers).
- Bromakin Aero Racer: A special kind of wheelchair used for racing.
- Part-time job: A job with fewer hours than a full-time job.
- Special education: Teaching students who have physical or learning disabilities.
- Childhood Disability Benefit (CDB): Money from Social Security for someone with a disability and a parent who has died.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI): A government payment for people with disabilities who have low incomes.
- Medicare: A national health insurance program, especially for people with disabilities or those over 65.
- Medicaid: Health insurance for people with low incomes or disabilities.
- Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS): A program from Social Security that helps people with disabilities reach work or school goals.
- Tuition: The money paid for college or school classes.
- Utilities: Basic services for a home, like electricity, water, and heat.

Modified Reading Calvin's Story

My name is Calvin and I'm a single father of two little girls, Micah and Josie. I grew up in a military family and moved around a lot to different countries. I married their mother, Sophia, when I was young. She was studying to become a lawyer while I worked at an Italian restaurant in Washington, D.C.

Four years into our marriage, Sophia finished law school and got a job working for a judge. Sadly, eight months ago she was hit by a taxi and died. She was crossing the street and didn't see the car coming. Now I'm raising our two daughters alone. Micah is 18 months old and Josie is three and a half years old.

After Sophia died, I had to move. I couldn't afford our apartment in Washington, D.C. anymore. The money we had saved was gone and I was very worried. My girls and I now live in **public housing** in a suburb outside D.C. I needed help to support my family.

One day at the library, I saw a flyer about a program called **TANF** (**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**). This is a **government program** that helps single parents who want to work while raising young children. It's sometimes called a **welfare-to-work program**.

I called and was assigned a counselor. The counselor explained the rules:

- I had to enroll in job training or education
- The **benefits** could only last for 60 months (5 years) maximum
- The goal was to help me become independent and get a job

This seemed fair to me. I thought, "If I can't get my life together in five years, we're in trouble!"

My TANF counselor helped me enroll in an **online** computer technician training program at a community college. I chose this career because:

- I could study from home while caring for my daughters
- Many school districts have large IT departments
- When my girls start school, we could all be on the same schedule

I take nine credits each semester and do most of my schoolwork at night while the girls are sleeping. I had to buy a computer and get Internet service to attend classes online. During final exams, I get help from a babysitting co-op, and I help other parents with babysitting when they need it.

Besides TANF, I receive help from other programs:

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) This program used to be called **food stamps**. It helps me buy groceries for my family. I'm grateful for this help while I'm in school and can't work full-time yet.

Medicaid This is **health insurance** for **low-income** people and families. Just recently, Josie woke up with a fever and an ear infection. We went to the emergency room and **Medicaid** paid the bill. Without this program, I couldn't afford to take my daughters to the doctor.

Two weeks ago, I got a part-time job at a computer repair shop. I work 15 hours per week and earn $9 per hour. I was worried about losing my government help, but these programs actually encourage you to work!

Here's how my money changed:

Income Source	**Before Job**	**With Job**

TANF monthly payment	$574	$250
My job earnings (after taxes)	$0	$520
Food stamps (SNAP)	$396	$353
Total Money	**$970**	**$1,123**

Our rent won't increase for the first year I'm working, so we actually have more money now than before! Because I'm working and going to school, I need someone to watch my daughters. I receive a **child care benefit** that helps pay for this.

I also learned that we qualify for the **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**. This is a special **tax refund** for working people with low incomes. My refund will be more than five months of my take-home pay! This will really help our family.

I know all this government help is temporary. It's like a bridge to help me get to a better place. These are small steps, but I can see things getting better. I feel proud when I can pay for groceries with my own money, not just food stamps.

I'm working toward a future where:

- I have a full-time job with **medical benefits**
- I can afford better housing for my family
- I don't need government assistance anymore

I'm beginning to see a new beginning for Josie, Micah, and me.

Key Vocabulary Terms

Benefits - Money or services provided by the government or an employer to help people (examples: health insurance, food assistance, cash payments)

Child care benefit - Government help to pay for babysitting or daycare while parents work or go to school

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) - A tax refund that gives extra money to working people with low incomes and children

Food stamps - Money provided by the government to help people buy food (now officially called SNAP)

Government program - A service created by the government to help citizens with specific needs

Health insurance - A plan that helps pay for doctor visits, medicine, and hospital bills

Low-income - Earning less money than what is typically needed to pay for basic needs like housing, food, and healthcare

Medicaid - A government health insurance program for people with low incomes

Medical benefits - Health insurance provided by an employer or government program

Online - Using the internet; taking classes over the computer instead of going to a classroom

Public housing - Affordable apartments owned by the government for people with low incomes

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) - The current name for the food stamps program; provides money to buy groceries

TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) - A government program that gives money and support to low-income families with children while helping parents find work

Tax refund - Money the government returns to you after you file your taxes, often because you paid too much or qualify for special credits

Welfare-to-work program - A program designed to help people receiving government assistance get job training and find employment

Modified Reading Swenson Family

Chloe's Story: When Dad Lost His Job

Life Before the Layoff

My name is Chloe Swenson. I have an older sister named Samantha and a younger brother named Dylan. We live in a small town on the Eastern Shore, not too far from a big city.

My dad worked as an **architect** - someone who designs buildings. My mom started as a stay-at-home mom but later got a job at a small local college in the admissions department. She worked her way up to become the Director of Admissions. She earns $4,000 per month.

About 10 years ago, when I was 5 years old, my parents bought an old farmhouse on 20 acres of land. The house was in bad shape, but my dad saw it as a challenge. He rebuilt the entire house, making every room special and efficient. He also built a barn, bought us horses, and created a horse arena. My siblings and I took riding lessons and competed in horse shows across the state. My friends love hanging out at my house because my dad made it so unique and interesting.

Everything Changed

Six months ago, my dad came home and told us he had been **laid off** from his job. I always thought being laid off happened to factory workers or construction workers, not architects! But it happened to my dad, and our whole life changed.

My dad used to earn $7,500 per month as an architect. Now he stays home most days, staring at the computer screen, searching for jobs that match his skills and experience.

How It Feels at Home

There's a sad feeling around our house now. My parents argue sometimes about money. Mom questions whether all the improvements Dad made to the house were worth it. Dad gets upset and says without those improvements, we wouldn't have a house at all!

Almost every day, someone brings up whether we can afford to stay in our house. I worry that one day a real estate agent will put a "For Sale" sign in our front yard. But Dad says the house is not our concern. He promises he will work out the **family budget** so we can stay. What IS our concern is cutting back on unnecessary spending everywhere we can.

Government Help: Unemployment Benefits

Dad applied for and now receives **unemployment benefits**. This means the government gives him cash while he looks for a new job. However, he only gets $1,863 per month - much less than his architect salary of $7,500 per month.

Our family had a meeting and made a promise to work together to get through this difficult time. My parents said that since the government is helping us, we have to help ourselves too.

How We Cut Back on Spending

Here are all the ways our family has changed our spending:

What We Gave Up:

- **Cable TV** - We canceled our cable subscription
- **Two cars** - We sold two of our three cars and now share one
- **Cell phone plans** - Instead of regular cell phone plans, we use prepaid cards with minutes
- My sister, brother, and I now **share one cell phone**
- We canceled our **landline** phone at home
- My parents share one phone (Mom uses her work phone mostly)
- **Eating at restaurants** - We only go out to eat when my grandparents visit

New Responsibilities:

- We take the **bus to school** instead of being driven
- We pack our own lunches instead of buying lunch
- Dad does most of the cooking since he's home (Mom is tired after work)
- We share household chores, including cooking

The Garage Sale: Two months ago, Mom told us to go through every drawer, closet, and storage space. We had to decide what we could sell in a **garage sale**. It took us two weeks to price everything, but we made close to $2,000! That money went straight to the bank to pay our **mortgage** (house payment).

Other Ways We Save:

- We follow the "90/90 rule" for air conditioning - both the temperature AND humidity have to reach 90 degrees before we turn on the AC
- We cut back spending in almost every possible way

What I Miss Most

I really miss shopping for clothes in the city. Clothes are very important to me. I used to spend hours looking through magazines, cutting out pictures of models and movie stars. I would plan outfits I could buy at the mall. Those pictures are still on my bedroom walls, and I hope we won't be broke for too long.

Now, once a month, Mom drives us to **thrift shops** in the city. These are stores that sell used clothes that other people donated. We buy clothes with money my grandmother sends us every month.

At first, I was shocked that this was how we had to shop. But I've learned that you can mix and match other people's old clothes and look just like everyone else at school - for much less money! I guess it's not so bad.

Good News!

It is now February - six months after Dad lost his job. Yesterday, Dad got a phone call from a large hotel company. He was on the phone for a long time talking to them.

That night we had a family meeting at our big kitchen table. Dad explained that the hotel company isn't building new hotels right now, but they need an architect to redesign their old hotels and make them spectacular.

As Dad talked excitedly about this opportunity, I looked around at the house he rebuilt many years ago. This job sounded perfect for him! When I looked at my dad's face, I saw something I hadn't seen in a very long time - the happy crinkles around his eyes when he smiles. A lot of years have passed since I first saw those crinkles. I'm glad to see them back again.

Key Vocabulary Terms

Architect - A professional who designs buildings and oversees their construction

Budget (Family budget) - A plan for how a family will earn and spend money; tracking income and expenses

Garage sale - An event where a family sells unwanted items from their home, usually in their garage or yard, to make extra money

Laid off - When an employer ends a worker's job, usually because the company doesn't have enough work or money, not because the worker did anything wrong

Landline - A telephone that is connected by wires, not wireless like a cell phone; usually stays in one location in a house

Mortgage - A loan people take out to buy a house; the monthly payment made to the bank for borrowing money to purchase a home

Prepaid card - A card you load with a specific amount of money in advance (for phone minutes, you pay first and then use the minutes until they run out)

Thrift shop - A store that sells used items (like clothes, furniture, books) donated by other people; items are sold at low prices

Unemployment benefits - Money the government pays to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own; helps them pay bills while they search for new work