

What is Wrong with Testing Welfare Recipients for Drug Use

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Abstract

Is mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients morally justifiable? This article argues that none of the three justifications typically offered in support of drug testing—that is, paternalist, contractualist, and harm-based justifications—are normatively persuasive. On the one hand, I claim that these normative justifications do not warrant the violation of welfare recipients' privacy. That is, I argue that they fail to make the case that the benefits of drug testing outweigh its costs in terms of welfare recipients' privacy. On the other hand, I argue that even if we accept any of these normative justifications for drug testing, current background conditions in the US make the implementation of this policy unfair in practice. First, the enforcement of drug testing can strengthen existing injustices. Second, under current circumstances, drug testing policies are likely to engender moral obligations which cannot be fulfilled..

Keywords

drug testing, welfare policies, behavioral conditionality.