

## **Vermont Child Poverty Council**

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion  
Questions and Answers  
Chittenden County, Burlington  
October 22, 2007

### **What circumstances put Vermonters in poverty and what barriers keep them there?**

- Lack of understanding between “haves” & “havenots”
- Our world of capitalism, greed & consumerism leads to bad policies
- Inflexible regulations around eligibility for services/resources (make \$100 loss of benefits) temporary assistance
- Piecemeal services, lack of holistic perspective
- General cost of living in VT
- Literacy, lack of education, livable wages, affordable housing, substance abuse, domestic violence, lack of child care & transportation, mental health issues
- Stigma & classism
- Rent-A-Center, check cashing – predatory lending
- Lack of education
- Catastrophic event/unplanned event, domestic violence, illness, divorce, job loss
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Isolation: being on the outside looking in
- Export of jobs
- “Isms”: racism, classism, sexism, ageism
- Social segregation by class
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Child care & other supports for parents lacking situational: divorce/death, domestic violence, apartment building where you live is sold & rent goes up – lost job – hours cut – need second job – child care hours don’t work
- Medical injury – treatments make you sick, can’t work
- Loss of transportation
- Family history – Generational – lack of role models
- Lack of training
- Loss of housing
- Low wages, limited capacity for higher wage jobs
- Seasonal work
- Housing costs going up
- Unsafe housing
- Disabilities & health care going down
- Employability going down

- Support systems going down
- Child care affordability and access going down
- Lack of transportation even on Sundays
- Mental health issues – eligibility criteria “cliff-effect” inadequate benefits
- Higher utility cost
- Financial literacy
- Rent-to-own/ predatory lenders
- No lemon law
- Poor nutrition & lack of sleep – lifestyle
- Necessity to work 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts impacts on family life
- Inflationary pressures on basic necessities: fuel, gas, food, housing, health insurance, child care costs etc.
- Job loss/unstable job market – business impacts/see above
- Substance abuse/co-occurring disorders
- Lack of education/skills
- Low wages
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of health/dental/disability/mental
- Complex delivery systems – fragmented
- Substance abuse
- Stigma
- Lack of education
- Catastrophic health problems, substance abuse, physical or mental health
- Cycle of Poverty – family dysfunction
- Frayed social net – income disparity
- Lack of education & high skills
- Low wages
- Housing discrimination
- Stigma related to class
- Underdeveloped emotional intelligence
- Emotional issues/stress
- Cost of living
- Inability to engage some children early on
- Lack of aspirations
- Lack of affordable options for higher ed.
- Lack of job options
- Lack of personal transportation
- Generational poverty
- Geographic isolation
- Substance abuse
- Criminal background
- Exploitation – financial (rent-a-center) – housing standards
- Health care
- Lack of extended family

- Lack of transportation
- Eligibility guidelines vs. livable income
- Multiple risk factors
- Transitional/economic services
- Disincentives to working
- Safe/affordable child care
- Cultural awareness
- Job availability
- Opportunities for education

**What do you think would help Vermonters move out of poverty?**

- Centralize services
- Trusting relationships
- Help increase assets
- Job training – skills training
- Expanded child care options
- Involve business community
- Get rid of cliffs
- Adequate funding for support services, transitions, off Reach Up
- Flexible use of funds to assist
- Partner with community based providers and organizations
- Housing
- Awareness of issue of poverty and class distraction
- Access to low cost housing – code enforce
- More resources, i.e., \$ - basic needs
- Better paying jobs
- Early intervention/prevention (drugs)
- Reliable/available transportation
- Gradual/supported transition to self-sufficient – eligibility criteria – smooth out cliffs
- Programatic approach to hiring transit employees
- Housing with wrap-around services & accountability
- What do families need
- Funding flexibility – move from reactionary to supportive prevention programs
- Rent control
- Higher minimum wage
- Income caps
- More equitable pay
- Improve tax policy – personal & business and economic development
- More public transportation
- Tax on excessive auto consumption

- Farm shares – subsidizing local farms – banning genetic engineering
- Earned Income Tax Credit
- More youth employment
- More supports for homeless students to stay in their home school
- “Housing works” – Universal housing
- Sustain & improve Catamount Health
- Access to dental care and specialty care
- Community schools & afterschool programs
- Incentives to landlords to give options to people with poor credit
- More housing enforcement
- More housing options: landtrust, owner occupied, communal housing
- Education supports
- Develop high skills – higher paying jobs
- More youth opportunities – low cost funding for higher education
- Affordable health care, child care, adequate safe housing
- Transportation
- Better management of opioid replacement
- Job training/education ( vocational, college, life skills)
- Awareness of cultural barriers – socio-economic culture, ethnic culture, etc.
- More user-friendly access to services in place, including voices of those we serve
- Access to a listening ear – valuing what individuals/families need
- Incentives vs. penalization (for work requirements)
- Eligibility for transitional services
- Services for fathers--supports for families staying together
- Livable wages
- Bring upper, middle, and lower class people all to the table to discuss these issues
- Education/awareness (video)
- Second chance opportunity/more flexible services
- Paid mentors from people who have been there
- Coordination of benefits/consolidated application process
- Affordable housing
- A miracle
- Livable wages – less than 30% of income for rent/mortgage
- Start with a “housing 1<sup>st</sup> model”
- Provide more “transitional” housing
- More housing retention programs, so families do not lose housing
- Accessible trades/apprenticeship programs
- Update federal poverty index or adjust
- Free/affordable child care – increase subsidy-decrease duplicated documentation –streamline!!!!!!!!!!!! Network
- Livable wage

- Hope
- More section 8/affordable housing
- Sense of community
- A voice in decisions
- Removing disincentives to work
- More jobs
- No arbitrary cut-offs for benefits
- More mental health care
- More employability: job skills and life skills training
- Apprenticeships
- More personal dignity
- Collaboration among helping orgs.
- \$ crisis intervention and more resources
- More health care
- More management of chronic illnesses
- More avail. child subsidies for child care providers

**What other thoughts, ideas, questions or suggestions would you like to share with the Council?**

- Raising pay of child care workers
- Universal health care
- Universal child care
- Look at other country's systems, VT could be first part of change, stop looking at each piece separately- throw it all out and start over – take risks--broad systemic change
- Question: is anyone talking to refugees in Chittenden Co? These children are living in poverty
- Promote earned income tax credit
- Need more input from low-income families-there weren't enough here today
- Family-friendly public policies designed to promote self-sufficiency – access to early information to encourage prevention – teen pregnancy – alcohol/drug abuse
- Mentoring programs – kids/single parents/incarcerated
- Access to programs when needed
- Treat – OH & drug abuse as health issue not crime
- Suspend judgment – it could be you
- More \$ into early years – Headstart, etc.
- Local Government/health care/healthy community
- Family-friendly employment policies
- Financial literacy –immigrants-balance the checkbook

- Meet people where they are at – physically and emotionally – listening to and valuing what they need
- How do we demonstrate results and meet people where they are at?
- How do we create an awareness in this community of this issue?
- Awareness of who can participate in this conversation
- Consider solutions outside the service system (neighborhood, faith-based, schools)
- Capitalize on community skills learned in daycare
- More sports and other enrichment, healthy activity programs
- More mentoring – kids, families “coaching
- More understanding poverty
- Agency accommodating varying work schedules
- More family-centered affordable activities
- Community centers
- Support for parents
- Community – cooperative living
- Career path for high school students
- Equal access to all resources
- Safe adequate house
- Safe, livable wage, work
- Adequate food & good nutrition
- More recreational facilities
- Statewide community discussion--community poverty assessment--community anti-poverty assessment--community-based networks
- Top down efforts and bottom up efforts together
- Importance of adult-child mentorships
- Linking possible vocational career interest w/education
- Choices & empowerment for impoverished youth
- Social programs =”investment”
- Address federal housing policy to increase affordable housing
- Where is the AHS reorg. process?
- What can we streamline and what are we stuck with? (documentation)
- Section 8, food stamps, WIC, child care subsidy, fuel Vhap/health, recreation/health programs: YMCA park and rec. etc.
- What can we do to reduce classism?
- Increase opportunities equally
- 80% of disabled people do not work due to fear/s many end up homeless
- Better counseling/supports for 1<sup>st</sup> generation college students
- Increase funding for community orgs. who do the work that agencies cannot or do not
- Increase the resource test for food stamps and Medicaid
- Change income tax structure for high income tax earner and property tax rehab system

- Create a more flexible prevention fund to prevent homelessness, back rent, less restrictive, expanded
- Control cost of living increases
- Substance abuse treatment
- Sensible, outcome-based decisions about people, funding, programs – accountability
- Creating a more stable home environment by determining what might work best
- Think about what VT would look like without poverty