

Vermont Child Poverty Council

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion
Questions and Answers
Orleans County, Newport
October 25, 2007

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

- Generational: fear of change, unaware of alternatives, sense of loyalty within the family
- Situational: loss of job, illness, divorce, disability (medical), substance abuse, domestic violence
- Barriers: lack of support/therapeutic, lack of livable wage-paying jobs, benefit cliffs, Reach Up policy to couples
- Unexpected events, circumstances that thrust people into poverty
- Generational poverty-breaking this cycle, awareness, mindset/value
- Lack of jobs that pay a livable wage
- Challenges that limit the ability to get an education
- Veiled to the possibilities available
- Resources transportation, housing
- Lack of socio-economic interpretation
- Cost of living (gas, heat, food, everything)
- Low wages
- Lack of jobs & jobs that pay well
- Having to choose between getting a raise and losing benefits
- Difference between hourly wage and take-home pay
- Parents don't get all of the child support – using child support to “pay back” Reach Up
- Lack of education
- Change in family structure (i.e. divorce)
- Lack of budgeting/money, management skills (relative poverty)
- Child care costs subsidy doesn't cover costs
- Lack of child care providers especially for infants
- Motivation to change (spending, behavior, priorities)
- Dental care – people need good teeth – no teeth, no job
- Health care generational issues
- Loss of job – no jobs
- Illness
- Disabilities
- Generational poverty
- Poor dental/health care
- Ineffective public policies
- Victim of domestic violence

- Substance abuse
- Misplaced societal values
- Lack of awareness
- Divorce
- Interrupted education
- Domestic violence
- Medical crisis
- Generational poverty
- Mental health issues
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Escalating basic living costs (housing etc.)
- Lack of jobs that pay money
- Disability
- Children raised by grandparents on fixed income

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

- Health/dental/vision care for all
- Affordable (subsidized) child care
- More jobs (that pay)
- Don't penalize people for getting raises (change policy)
- Stop the war (could pay for other things with the money)
- We're losing jobs to other countries, need to address that, change trade policies
- Paid family leave – to give children a good start
- Applications – simplify initial process & allow updates instead of reapplying
- Maintain/expand post secondary education programs
- Resources and awareness of
- Housing w/skill building included
- Section 8 vouchers
- Budgeting/financial/guidance
- Incentives to continue education
- Overlap of benefits after employment
- Change federal priorities
- Change federal, state tax policies so that upper income folks pay their share
- Paid sick time (would help people stay employed and keep sick people home)
- Alternative education
- Education – reach up!
- Early intervention (real, focused, organized)
- Supportive services
- Financial literacy education

- Respectful relationships (giving and getting)
- Awareness to change public policy
- Good jobs, livable wages, industry-sustainable
- Health care (universal) not tied to employment (dental care)
- Earlier access to vocational ed.
- Affordable housing
- More incentives, fewer “cliffs” in benefit programs
- Stop the war
- Stop cutting effective programs
- Transportation
- Universal child care/early education
- Life choice skills
- More basic need funding, housing etc., based on general costs of living
- Educational opportunities, create more options, have these available before the bottom falls out (e.g., teens drop out of high school)
- Preventative measures
- Life skill and tech. training
- Transitional programs help to fill in the gaps between services

What is your vision for Vermont, without children living in poverty?

- Children are treated equally, regardless of income
- Children encouraged to believe in themselves
- Open & vibrant community center to eliminate isolation & foster inclusivity
- We take care of young families
- Seamless and systematic program of assistance to reward self-improvement efforts
- Our vision for VT is for Vermont without children in poverty
- Children would eat better
- Vermont businesses run by and worked in by Vermonters – incentives for children to stay here
- Lower crime, less drug use/abuse, fewer wasted lives
- Less depression, less stress-related illness
- Healthier children
- Adequate resources for early intervention and programs
- Vermont is model for the world
- Lower health care costs
- Less corrections/jail costs
- Less domestic violence and child abuse
- More quality family time and fun activities
- Early intervention
- Mechanism within the educational system to identify need and holistically deal with family on a reasonable time line with realistic expectations
- More help for working families, remove barriers that split families

- Job opportunities
- More affordable housing
- Fund after-school programs
- Summer food programs
- Fund teen centers/big brother/big sister, etc.
- Help for kids to participate in sports
- Supportive communities where everyone cares about one another
- People are more mobile, so we need to work to get to know our neighbors
- Community gardens
- Social connectedness

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

- Coordination of and expansion of transportation opportunities, i.e. Good News Garage statewide, funding increase for expansion of RCT (transportation service in Orleans) services
- Expand second chance opportunities for education
- Dig deeper – ask questions – make meaningful connections
- Fewer judgments – a return to compassion
- Child support issues need fixing
- Fix TPE (again) (teen parent ed.)
- Change disposition of child support
- Gradual withdrawal of financial supports as income increases
- Reward progress to self-sufficiency
- Make good role models more visible
- School lunch free for all children (and breakfast) would reduce stigma
- USDA provide food supplements, including fresh produce, nutritious meals = better for learning
- Would school uniforms reduce stigma? Everyone dresses the same
- Reduce tax withholding for lower income people
- Pay EITC monthly instead of an end-of-year refund
- Access to affordable/low interest loans (instead of credit cards or “payday” loans)
- Credit classes
- Lower college costs
- Connect budgeting to benefits – might be barrier
- Create successful long-term programs that support transition from public assistance to self-sustainability
- Help spread the awareness of values
- Therapeutic services in place for guidance and direction
- More citizen involvement
- Break down the barriers
- Change attitudes

- Fully fund successful programs – child care subsidy
- Focus on nutrition programs for children
- Make fresh produce available