

Vermont Child Poverty Council

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion
Questions and Answers
Bennington County, Bennington
November 5, 2007

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

- Circumstantial poverty – generational poverty
- Job market poor – nowhere to work
- Lack of insurance or inadequate insurance
- Lack of education
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of dental care
- Lack of affordable housing – cost of housing, lack of housing for single adults
- Disability – physical and mental
- Lack of expectations
- Transitional services – being able to continue services
- Loss of benefits once working
- Lack of education
- Break the cycle of generational poverty
- Housing stability for each family not available – cannot move forward without this--or stay out of the system even if other basics in place
- Help available on “little”(but essential) problems not communicated
- Assumptions made about what families have/have access to
- Generational poverty – no models
- Change in society: living wage, etc.
- Higher high school dropout rate
- Subculture of poverty that is hidden
- Seasonal nature of some employment – no safety net in working environment - tree work, farming
- Independent attitude
- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Fear of change – parents/grandparents/want children to stay in culture or they will lose them
- Birth – generational poverty
- Job loss
- Divorce
- Death
- Illness
- Fear of loss of services with increased income
- Loss of industry

- Lack of education
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Lack of opportunity
- Willingness to accept help
- Knowing how to access help
- Lack of leadership within the culture of the poor
- Lack of self-esteem – feeling like you can't make a difference
- Hostility toward the poor
- Birth – family history
- Education barriers
- Locating jobs
- Low paying jobs
- Divorce, death, health issues
- Chronic health problems
- Disabilities
- Lack of vision for a better life
- Feeling of disenfranchisement
- Poor choices
- Stigma
- Lack of funding/resources to move out of poverty
- “the cliff of eligibility for financial resources”
- The fear of change
- Loss of familiar
- Any combination of the above
- Inadequate housing/expensive housing
- Generational--people who have never really gotten out of poverty
- Systematic--the system supports keeping people in poverty (if a client gets a raise, may lose food stamps or Medicaid)
- Single parent household
- Lack of education
loss of job – due to loss of child care or lack of health
loss of living wage jobs
- Domestic violence
- Seasonal employment
- Substance abuse/criminal generational repetition
- Housing--public and low income/affordable
- Judgmental attitude/expectations low
- Ignorance/lack of understanding
- Aspire/follow-through services and costs
- Case management for services in rural and small towns
- Cost of gas
- Transportation
- Better understanding of services
- Drug/alcohol pretest for work

- Jobs and work ethic
- Cycle of poverty – generations
- Lack of education
- Loss of good paying jobs-outsourcing, loss of manufacturing
- Rural isolation
- Penalties for trying to get out of poverty “benefit cliff”
- Transportation issues
- Mindset – “I am doing fine”
- Housing opportunities – cost
- Health – mental and physical--lack of health care--health issues affect ability to work
- Haves and have nots
- Full time residents vs. second home owners
- Elimination of factory job and jobs moving to the Pacific rim
- View of factory work
- Skill base needs to increase and competencies are more complicated
- Part-time employees without benefits/consistent schedules
- Economy based on impoverished population
- Substance abuse
- How effective is treatment
- Lack of transportation
- “Punishments” that are not effective curtailment, abstract consequences
- Criminalize everything
- Expectations that child will be a failure
- Lack of resources for necessity
- Reimbursement rates
- Oral health is really a part of health care
- Literacy
- Not enough mentors/role model

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

- Education
- More, better paying jobs
- Affordable housing
- Affordable inclusive, integrated preschool
- Public transportation
- Adequate and affordable child care
- Education around personal finances
- Accessible mental health service, adequate family planning
- Money
- Incentive programs for people trying to get out of poverty
- Better transitional services

- Fuel/heating costs
- Health care
- Empowering thru education/job training
- Mobile response to services
- Network and who has info – 211
- 3-6 pm support/mentoring/supervision, affordable child care/ after-school
- Access to child care
- Cost of living
- Case manager model – one stop with many services
- Livable wage
- More education
- 24 hour day care/affordable so single parents can work 3rd shift or weekends etc.
- Substance abuse treatment
- Supportive services – mentoring for parents and children
- Affordable housing
- Better transportation system
- Public trans.
- Rent to own—rent-a-center gone, mobile home parks
- Multi-faceted support –training also to providers-more independent
- Substance abuse-supports
- Prevention of root causes – looking what are cultural norms in community
- Public campaign, ask for help, attitudes of people
- Mentoring – every one needs a mentor
- All schools full service school – with funding
- Sustainable funding
- 7 out of 7 involved in DOC
- Transitional services – 10%
- Need to support education
- No at-will employment
- Identify “benchmarks” to statistical drop-out probability and intervene early
- True scholarships for college
- Elimination of cut-offs at 18 or whenever that create new problems, like meds.
- “Sell” long-term benefits (vs. immediate costs of services) to taxpayers – “cheaper” in the end
- Increased local services for people on substance abuse
- Jobs that pay well and have benefits
- Education – starting with good health before birth – early language experience –reading to children to develop vocabulary
- Better transportation system
- Systemic responses to barriers
- Broaden family vision
- Housing at prices, not high density; people can pay

- Job training
- Incentives for parents to participate in education, training, economic system
- Educational choices
- Transitions from services once working
- Restructure benefits to allow gradual phase-out with some gains
- Building self-worth into our children--they can get out and deserve to move ahead
- Affordable housing
- Higher living wage
- Better assistance for people with mental illness
- More drug/alcohol treatment centers in Bennington County
- More availability for career center programs for adults
- Transportation services
- Full service schools – including being able to engage the parents – building their work skills
- Affordable health care
- Changing age of dropping out of school higher
- Expanded career centers
- More services for working parents (i.e. child care hrs.)
- Work force development
- Smaller families
- Support network- family, friends, neighbors, faith, communities
- Good dental care
- Funding for health care
- Transition supports for people moving out of poverty
- Career/work for development
- Resources that address barriers such as substance abuse
- Mentors and training in employment area – provide incentives
- Array of jobs that meet the needs of : the unskilled workforce, those with high school degrees, those with significant skills
- Cultural or community shift in our perspective in substance abuse and the value of education
- Readily available child care 24/7
- Family-friendly work schedule – flexibility
- Adequate transportation system
- Get rid of rent-a-centers
- Vision of something better for your kids (parents)

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

- All kids trans. successfully
- Mixed income housing
- Employer assisted child care
- Universal health care – dental mental health
- 95% post grad training or education
- Community colleges were less expensive
- Jail population is reduced to 0
- Transportation services expanded
- Sustainable livable wage
- 300 % of poverty for schip
- Children are living in safe house
- Reduction of domestic violence
- That all students are considered learners and valued for their personal skills
- Parents have skills to get well-paying jobs
- Expansion of mentoring program
- Programs are funded for longer/sustainable periods
- Supports are built to allow families as much time as they need to be independent
- Every person and generation is valued
- Just do it
- Children in stable housing with food, heat, and other basic necessities
- Quality health care for everyone
- Educational opportunities so that more people have good jobs
- More opportunities in the field of environment, fine arts
- A state where people are not hungry, cold, homeless
- Better acceptance of people who are struggling in poverty
- Closing the gap between lower-income and higher income population
- Better funding for supportive services
- No tolerance for children having to witness drugs, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence
- No homeless or hungry children
- Improved dental, physical health
- Mental health too
- Happier people = safer communities, risky behavior would be reduced
- More productive society in all ways, not just economic
- Children will have home and trust in the future (parents, too)
- All children will be able to read and write
- Teachers will be respected, education looked at as an important part of society
- No children dropping out of school
- Access to funding to college for all

- No more homeless shelters
- Wages, less disparity in wages
- Higher quality jobs
- Better transportation
- Minimum wage – a livable standard
- Parents having the supports they need to be good parents – formal or informal
- Fewer people in prison
- Higher quality of public housing
- No more domestic violence/child abuse
- Everyone's basic needs being met
- Self-esteem course for kids all the way through high school
- Confidence in all children

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

- Less talk, more action
- More client participation in the VT child poverty council meetings
- Uniform 5 ½-day proposal could lead to more full day closing=no breakfast/lunch for kids on those days
- Take action – we know what needs to be done
- Stop the war – use federal money for positive programs
- Statewide bonds for school construction
- Stop building roads in Chittenden County
- Free up money for other things
- Four-year term for governor to make it easier to have sustained initiatives
- Compensate teachers fairly across the communities
- Support education through something other than property tax
- The environment plays a huge part in the lives of people such as increased cost of oil, etc.
- Get the next step – talk to action
- Prioritize issues and fund the top 3-4
- Can we change federal priorities and state priorities
- Change the rules so that people who earn \$1.00 more don't fall off the cliff of eligibility for assistance
- Rewards for “the extra mile” in offering supportive services – in life skills to the agency
- Training of teachers on how to incorporate life skills into all academics on all levels
- Creating an info bank statewide to: a) inform, that many students take 5-20 years to complete college, etc. b) demo identified “best practices” to navigate between job/family “years” and years where study/training are incorporated again

- Nontraditional paths to success
- Reevaluating guidelines for services
- Respect and better understanding of clients who use the system (vice versa)
- Child care for younger and older kids, including more afterschool programs for working parents
- School supplies, activities, etc. free or get funding for materials for kids who can't afford
- Physical activity for all students
- Involvement by those in poverty
- More education for profess. In schools, i.e. Sketch book
- Parent/teacher relations – where?
- Adult ed./Opportunities
- Federal commitment to ending poverty
- List of all who attended and info for network purposes
- How can we provide more services with fewer resources (money)
- One-time funding does not allow programs or families to become successful
- Sustainable public transportation
- People, students, teachers, parent, police, caregiver, etc. everyone needs to be respected
- Funding structure in VT is pitting divisions and competition
- Encourage strong communities
- Health care for all (dentistry)
- Business-based child care over a number of employees
- Age 3 – early exposure – fully funded – headstart-preschool- rec. assistance = \$ enroll early
- Parent outreach – involved in solution
- Appropriate money for schools/teachers
- Access to education and services economy of scale