

Vermont Child Poverty Council

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion
Questions and Answers
Addison County, Middlebury
November 15, 2007

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

- Unexpected life events – even a car repair
- Having to pay for health insurance or not having insurance
- Predatory schemes – check cashing, rent to own, loans, etc.
- Addiction's implications on life
- Mental health/physical health conditions and issues
- Cost of living is out of control, wages don't keep up
- Spending money on war, misplaced federal priorities
- Hopelessness, if people have good options they will take them
- Affordable quality child care
- Income
- Loss of employment
- Lack of skills
- Generational
- Health – mental health/physical health
- Local economy
- Current society
- Tax structure
- Rising costs – fuel, food, housing, transportation, health care, child care
- Childcare availability and quality
- Lack of educational opportunities, funding, time, child care, employer support
- Workplace flexibility – understanding family needs and challenges
- Substance abuse
- No money
- No health insurance
- Low income jobs
- No job opportunities
- Lack of education
- No marketable skills
- Lack of affordable housing
- Health problems: dental insurance, etc.
- High price of fuel and food
- Wages do not go up with cost of living
- Crushing debt

- Termination of employment
- Not enough community support
- Lack of information
- Mental health
- No back-up support for families
- All inclusive health care
- Women fleeing domestic violence
- Lack of affordable housing
- Women's work is undervalued – women's jobs pay less
- Impossible to juggle school, work, and child care
- When you start to get out of poverty, you lose benefits; "hit the wall"
- Savings count against you, no way to build assets if you are getting assistance
- Not enough education
- Bias in public education – race, class, etc. - can be hard to get services and support
- Applying for assistance can be humiliating and degrading
- A sick child isn't seen as a reason to not be at work
- Children are viewed as barriers to work
- Stigma keeps people from joining together (rise up) to make things better
- Even when you make enough to not be in poverty, you have to pay for child care and health insurance
- There should be a second step or help tiered system
- Drivers ed. Money, support kids who aren't in school (Mexicans)
- Inform people of services, some people don't get TV or newspaper
- More money for people in service-oriented jobs (child care, elderly)
- Consumerism/materialism trap
- Transportation
- Isolation
- Dads
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Generational – culture of poverty, fear of doing something different, role models they grew up with
- Limited assets mean immediate problems
- Problems quickly reach crisis level
- Families are operating on the "edge"
- Lack of education
- Living moment to moment
- Inability to advocate for self
- Unaware of middle class rules that are important in education and employment
- Not knowing where resources are and how to ask
- Health care crisis – lack of adequate care
- Change of culture

- Loss of rural (farming, logging)
- Domestic violence
- Livable wage
- Cost of living going up faster than wages
- No cushion, no emergency funds
- Gender inequity
- Global economy, federal budget, federal priorities
- Access to education, especially for the parents
- Affordable housing, only one landlord (monopoly in Addison)
- Generational poverty
- Low skill acquisition to obtaining financially sustainable employment, lack of alternative education resources
- Frequent need for families to move
- Increase in situational poverty where there is no easy way out, job loss, divorce, medical crisis, increased housing, vehicle, child care expenses
- Illusion of “upward mobility” in a system built on debt and credit
- Federal spending priorities
- Lack of affordable housing
- Human service system that creates a dependency, safety net vs. ladder out
- Lack of education, higher ed., college, cost barrier
- Generation – family hold child in its debt
- Middle class thinking in human services
- Family members left behind
- Stigma – people afraid
- 1,000 barriers in the way of getting out, system set up unrealistic goal, child care, transportation, not a living wage, support system, health care, access and catch 22

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

- Time
- Extended support
- Single payer health care
- Career counseling (guidance); what can we do?
- Apprentice system
- Jobs with benefits
- Higher pay for women and minorities
- Holistic service; serve whole family
- Relationships
- Blended services
- Technology for efficiency and services
- No one succeeds without support
- Training of marketable skills

- Federal and state government should fund community efforts to support families
- Flexibility with applicable guidelines in providing services
- Pursuit of education
- Publicly funded health care for all
- Legal justice; obliterate private health insurance
- Livable wage
- Recognize actual poverty based on real experience and cost of living
- Financial stability, affordable, housing, child care, transportation, health care, insurance. Fuel assistance
- Flexible work schedule, flexible hours for child care
- Economic development, new jobs
- Change “poverty rate” qualification guidelines for social programs
- Making assistance more available, more acceptable, outreach to clients
- Affordable higher education, access to support to get through system
- Affordable housing
- Family friendly employer, understand the demands on parents, youth, homework
- Child care: good high quality, infant slots
- Transportation – public and private
- Opportunity to gain skills, life skill, work environment skills
- Community education, middle class, learn the world of poverty
- Flexible programs
- More holistic, strength-based programming
- Address drug abuse as health issue
- More funding for programs that exist, need to keep up with costs
- Economic development and housing needs to be strategic and coordinated
- Create jobs not in service industry
- Train people for good jobs and have good jobs available
- IDA – individual development accounts
- Life skills in school--budgets, loans, credit, care repair, etc.–for all
- Students, not just “poor kids”
- Neighbors helping neighbors--make strong local communities
- Increase public transportation options and alternative transportation local economies--town that have the services and goods needed by people living there
- Address everything – no one thing will be successful by itself
- Education both for adults and children, literacy, financial, life skill, job skills
- Affordable housing
- Housing assistance programs (subsidy), home ownership programs
- Adequate and available health care
- Child care, especially infants
- Support families thru transitions

- Employment opportunities – recruit businesses
- Better paying jobs/livable wages
- Transportation
- Inform people/awareness to others/be friendly/encouragement/community involvement/relationships
- Universal health care (everyone)
- Universal child care
- Don't count saved money penalties
- Universal/fair education/value education
- Jobs
- Stop separating church from State of Vermont tiered system
- Accepting responsibility
- Relationships
- Share with others
- Teens that are parents able to get food stamps
- Shift to work programs instead of incarceration
- More money (Reach Up limits)
- Adequate wages that keep up with cost of living
- Universal health care
- Employers who are sensitive to child care issues
- More and better housing options
- Section 8 vouchers need to match cost
- Stop blaming individuals for system failures, don't penalize people for agency errors
- Adequate funding for people to get college degrees
- A system that provides a lot of assistance to people in crisis so that people can work their way out
- Don't be stingy up front
- People are supported in setting up their own businesses and helping them succeed
- Better way for people to find out about and get available services
- Affordable college would encourage people to go
- Skill set acquisition/asset building, money management
- Negotiation skills/self-advocacy, education
- Benefited well-paying jobs
- Moving our systems to an incentive model vs. punitive
- Financial asset building, IDA's need to focus on 6-month savings plans for emergencies, permanent housing. etc., more affordable housing
- Engaging young Vermonters to join the "poverty corps" paying for workers to invest in education, fighting against poverty
- Affordable child care
- Universal health care, do the single payer system better

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

- Universal health care
- No homelessness
- Jobs for all, livable wage
- Increased collaboration between all service providers
- Affordable, quality child care
- College ed. for anyone who wants it
- Streamline paperwork
- Eliminate all forms of abuse
- Children are viewed as a gift and not a burden
- Access to family planning
- More “we” thinking than “me” thinking – strong communities
- Environmental equity – neighborhoods, foods
- Health, food and nutrition education
- Remove walls between people and places
- Healthy children
- Available good quality child care
- Safe, affordable housing livable wage
- All insured, all insurance accepted, people treated with respect
- Full employment
- Strong supportive communities- role models
- Adequate dentists
- Pre K for all
- More value birth through 5
- Family support
- Job training – education
- Substance abuse prevention
- Parent training
- Health and nutrition classes
- Reduced family violence and abuse
- No “labels” – no stigma
- Divert money from war to war on poverty
- Complete health care from birth
- More money on education than jails
- Better nutrition
- Preventative services: health, delinquency, teen age pregnancies, etc.
- Keep children in school
- Respect for everyone and respecting differences
- Better communications: families, villages (communities)
- Safe communities and families
- Good mentoring programs
- Support for all, e.g. afterschool sports, programs
- Focus on quality v. quantity

- Health care is available/affordable for all Vermonters
- United Way would not be funding crisis intervention and instead would fund new initiatives and program enhancement
- Schools would be able to focus on education and skill building
- All Vermonters would be engaging in working to alleviate poverty
- Support policies that encourage building relationships as a way to move out of poverty
- De-politicalization of these key issues
- Access to quality child care, education, off-hour child care
- People don't have to think of basic needs, food, shelter, health care, transportation, work, education
- With these needs met, decrease in abuse, substance abuse, violence, crime
- More human welfare system
- Loving supporting community for every child
- Time for community
- No one would be hungry or cold
- Good education
- Health care for everyone
- Keep spirit of Vermont, loss of rural
- Not to live in fear every day of financial issues, car breaking down, bill collectors
- Unrestricted funds
- No discrimination age, race, etc. for employment
- Common humanities (not looking down)
- Chance to get a start, a second change, mentor
- Good food
- It would look like the tourist Vermont; Legislative Council people would get along/relate to others
- More energy – wouldn't need to work on survival
- Basic survival skills met – housing, food, able to engage more when not needing to fight
- Cure it
- No abuse/violence
- Empty jails
- Warm heat
- Employed with livable wage
- Kids need clothes for all seasons
- No debt
- No hunger
- Solving poverty for kids would have a chain reaction to solving all poverty
- Everyone would be healthy
- Services – no fund cuts
- Education

- Fewer cliques – division of the people
- End climate of fear, if I get a flat tire and can't get to work and lose my job
- No one would have to choose among food, heat, rent
- People would have a second chance if needed
- People would feel that their work is rewarded – it's worth it to try
- A single wage earner can support a family
- Every child has equal access to education at all levels
- Everyone has a right to housing
- Decent paid parental leave- would help moms who want to breast feed and get children off to a good start, i.e. one year
- Children would be recognized and appreciated as assets
- No one has to choose between being a good parent, a good worker, meeting material needs
- All child care would be high quality and there would be enough of it
- Healthy kids
- Kids get to grow up in an environment as good as their parents and grandparents (not all sprawl)
- Kids grow up in a real community, everyone looks out for one another, safe neighborhoods, trust your neighbors
- Profit isn't the bottom line, money isn't the only important thing
- A generation prepared to accept the massive responsibilities of democracy

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

- Local communities and small businesses need to be honored and supported. Level the playing field for small, local against chains
- Revitalize decimated communities
- Educate people about 80/20 – 20% of people have 80% resources and they try to keep it that way
- Poverty is a symptom/side-effect of current capitalist system
- Fair trade
- Educate people about the true costs of war – impact of costs on programs
- Use media and hold media accountable
- Dispel myth of “lazy people” getting assistance – have people try it themselves
- Don't humiliate people with so many personal questions and forms when they ask for assistance
- Reduce paper work and simplify processes
- Build systems on trust
- Fund prevention, address causes not just symptoms
- Get rid of no child left behind

- Reach Up travel reimbursement should equal state employee's
- Tie reach-up benefits to governor's salary (as Ben & Jerry's did)
- Bring business people and chamber of commerce into conversation in a meaningful way
- Poverty is bigger than a partisan issue, needs support from all sides to end
- Address stigma associated with poverty and receiving benefits
- No one who works full time should have to depend on state assistance – jobs should pay enough to meet needs even at minimum wage
- People shouldn't have to work more than one job
- Keep employers from manipulating employee hours to avoid providing benefits
- Support elected officials who support families and children
- Treat all with dignity
- Teach children empathy and understanding for future society
- Care for all children – provide safety – support-education-health care
- Eliminating wealth – equalize finance, what is enough, stop the system of wanting more, can't have poverty without wealth
- Motivation for independence
- Stop pride issues
- Mentors for children
- Put money from emergency preparedness into financial emergency
- War-why is it still going on?
- Take the best from all
- Vermont stand up to federal government
- Create our own guidelines around time limits, farmers
- Universal health care
- Transportation
- Livable wages
- The government can give us (VT) the money and we will manage it ourselves
- Volunteer
- Keep supporting early intervention services with money
- This is possible now with different political values
- Thank you to VT leg. To take this issue and to listen to the people affected
- Effort to improve poverty improves all society
- Where is Gov. Douglas? This is his town
- Vermont's small population size allows management of process and be a pilot for other states
- Public dialogue – open the subject
- No connection between political and issue
- Culture of fear
- Convictions limit opportunities
- Home school diploma discrimination

- College should not be the only way to a good paying job
- Make sure these suggestions are acted upon
- Raise taxes, progressively
- Everyone has a public service requirement for all citizens, get people out of the “me” mentality
- Continue this discussion
- Substance abuse treatment programs
- Raise awareness about local poverty issues, it’s well hidden
- Return of dental care via Medicaid and/or support individuals in seeking it elsewhere
- More support for rural economy advocacy for the poor
- Clean up dead wood at state level, save money and put those monies to a fund helping the poor
- Ensure state level employees are qualified for post assigned
- Minimum wage to match federal level
- Regulate rental amounts
- Mental health and substance abuse issues, we can’t meet their needs, housing, treatment
- Recent immigration issues, bringing in outside workers that may be replacing local workers
- Incarceration vs. treatment
- Need to support/create flexible financial support systems
- Spend more money on services and less money on administration
- More block grant funding
- Shifting our focus to measure how we are doing vs. how many people did we serve