

## Vermont Child Poverty Council

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion  
Questions and Answers  
Lamoille County, Morrisville  
November 13, 2007

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

- Generational
- Catastrophic occurrences
- Lack of livable wage
- Lack of transportation, daycare, healthcare
- Lack of higher education
- Rising costs (fuel, housing, food)
- Jobs lost replaced by lower wage jobs
- Stigma “playing the system”
- Feeling judged when go to get help
- The they think of themselves holds them back (I deserve this” blocks you)
- Media: successful, happy, consuming middle class
- rural, remote nature of the state created a barrier
- Situational: illness, loss of job, low wage job, divorce/separation
- Generational: value differences, lack of access to resources, lack of education, fear of change/unknown
- Environmental factors: buy now/pay later, credit card debt (marketing, interest rates, etc.), societal attitudes toward debt, technology, lack of resources (housing, childcare, trans., food, gas, etc....)
- Divorce
- Domestic violence
- Job loss
- Healthcare
- Death
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Livable wage
- Teen pregnancy
- Affordable housing access to transportation
- Affordable quality childcare
- Lack of education
- Lack of life skill/decision making
- Living in crisis mode
- Pride/fear/stigma
- Access to supports
- Isolation/lack of support system

- Physical distance geography
- Time/energy/stress
- Needs and wants
- Background knowledge
- Lack of family support
- Divorce generational
- Lack of child support enforcement
- Children going into state custody
- Transportation
- Lack of childcare (quality)
- Lack of non-traditional hours availability
- High fuel costs
- Illness
- Mental health
- Lack of gradual reduction of assistance when earning income
- High rent
- Losing a job
- Lack of education/training
- Substance abuse
- Penalized for trying to save money
- Federal income guide lines for assistance too low
- Global effects
- Lack of information about assistance
- Lack of housing – affordable or otherwise
- Hunger
- Hopelessness
- Transportation
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Lack of understanding/empathy
- NIMBY
- Cost of child care -lack of subsidy money – lack of quality care
- Community denial
- Cost of utilities and fuel – penalties as well as price
- Underfunded social service programs
- Classism
- Divorce
- Domestic violence
- Job loss/layoff
- Change in economics (gas ,food, housing, heating
- Medical crisis, physical, mental, substance abuse (etoh & drugs)
- Loss of a spouse (death)
- Disability
- Generational (what keeps people in poverty over years)

- One income home
- Injury, illness
- Lack of resources,
- Childcare (lack of affordable or quality childcare)
- Financial barriers
- Institutional barriers
- Cost of living high
- Transportation
- Substance abuse
- Criminal back round
- Mental health issues
- Education
- Generational poverty
- Livable wage
- System penalties
- System roadblocks
- Lack of local jobs
- Change in family circumstances
- Lack of jobs that pay well for all
- Any serious health issue
- Lack of health insurance
- Breakup of family
- Lack of public and private transportation

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

- Allow families to build assets without penalties
- Simplify eligibility process for all programs
- Make eligibility automatic based on enrollment in one program
- Don't ask to have info provided from scratch every time
- Make it easier for people to get documents they need (ie birth certificates)
- Make poverty level more realistic
- Eliminate the benefit cliff (small changes in income causes loss of benefits)
- Improve/increase literacy and education
- Universal healthcare
- Livable wage, more jobs
- Affordable childcare
- Housing with supportive services, wraparound services, more integration of programs, bring in public sector, diversify training ( value jobs in trades)
- Subsidize the training, when left to private industry it's tempting to outsource jobs

- Expand early childhood education (food prog., other supports so they can be as “vibrant” as can be)
- People need to listen better to what indiv. Really need rather than throwing everything at them
- Preventive programs (example credit/loan agencies) rather than waiting until they are bankrupt
- Financial literacy (micro lending)
- Mentoring/connection to the community
- Education (access & affordability)
- Life skills early in life and for those who didn’t get them
- Trade/vocational/technical ed.
- Exposure to new ideas and differing values. (comm.. education)
- Knowing about choices folks have
- More resources / slower transition once resources are accessed (housing, child care, transportation, food, etc...)
- Hope
- Support from family and community
- Recognition that system may not see natural supports as helpful, but families do
- One stop shopping-coordinate benefits/eligibility determination
- Affordable housing
- Better transportation to central locations
- Do not make everything on-line only make application available in multiple ways
- Affordable education and vocational training
- More use and benefit of current system
- More affordable housing – quality affordable housing
- Universal healthcare
- Raise subsidy
- Mentoring for support system
- Start a war on poverty
- Simplify paperwork
- Better and more customer service at state agencies
- Affordable housing
- Jobs other than retail / service
- Affordable education
- Mentors to help with basic skill/needs
- A method to consistently and accurately assess families needs
- Increase federal and state income guidelines for assistance
- Family support teams
- Eliminate social service barriers (such as penalties for mistakes)
- More nontraditional hours for social services
- Education
- Training jobs transportation

- Childcare
- Life skills (money mgmt., coping with stress, crisis mgmt., childrearing)
- Support systems, mentors
- Self advocacy
- Stigma of poverty prevents asking for help
- Rich early childhood learning experiences available to all
- Early intervention for learning and social/emotional issues
- If people needing services were not distrustful of “the system”
- Stability – stable affordable housing, job with livable wage
- Affordable, housing, childcare
- Study to learn from success
- Reliable transportation
- More collaborative approach – intensive (case management team to wrap around families...ea. Specialist)
- Responsive and flexible educational system
- Trust and respectful relationships
- Seamless services
- Mentor families
- Peer navigator
- Info tech that navigate system\human services policy that make sense

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

- No stigma in asking for help or receiving help when needed
- System of community volunteerism (through schools, employers, etc..) to help others
- Well-aligned federal and state priorities to end poverty (prevent)
- Realignment of boundaries for receiving services – state and non-profit programs/organizations have different service areas
- Mobile services bring services to where families are
- Services available out side M-F 8-5 working hours
- Stable homes for all: safe, loving, no violence, part of community, encouraging, consistent, positive role models
- A community that respects individual differences
- Come to school ready to learn
- Generation that cares for each other and for the world around them
- Kids will be dreamers
- School: fed, read to, clothes (warm), safe at home interesting things, heat, outdoor recess, teeth, after school and summer programs, mentoring
- Family feels dignity, successful in providing
- Community feels respect to its children as their children, providing jobs for kids

- Fewer parents in prison, less drug use
- Adults take kids seriously
- Activities: music, theatre, arts, playing outside, inter generational activities, sports
- No stigma
- The lowest rate of subsidized lunches
- All children can get a higher education
- Act and engaged youth and citizens
- Physically and mentally healthy
- Children have 2 ( at least) supportive, loving, involved adults in their lives)
- No domestic violence (or less)
- Children who have hope for their future and a plan for a better life
- Families able to save for future needs
- More parents involved in schools
- No hunger
- No need for drug abuse/crime
- People feeling safe
- Healthy children able to go to doctor and dentist regularly
- Children able to participate in extracurricular activities
- Everyone has access to enough quality food and a way to cook it
- Improved school meals
- Everyone has a livable home
- Children have unqualified access to health care, parents too
- Affordable system for paying for health care
- All children have safe, quality affordable childcare
- It is economically possible for parents to provide their own child care
- Increased sense of caring about poverty by increasing knowledge so people don't make assumptions
- Children ready to learn
- Supporting transition from HS to post sec. ed.
- Healthcare a right not a privilege
- Educate public re: misconceptions about poverty
- People in poverty need to be invited to be part of the solution and economic development discussion
- Systems need to be flexible to different service
- Mentor families so no one feels isolated
- Engage people in the system they are living in
- Front load system to invest in long term solution
- Free higher ed.
- Kids are well fed and well rested for school each morning
- All children can participate in offered activity
- Higher education available to all
- Quality of life is enriched for all
- Prisons are no longer needed

- Hope, possibility, energy
- Less division among community members based on false assumptions

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

- Don't forget older kids – many services focus on younger kids
- As school enrollment decreases there may be room for added services
- Help people recognize how easy it can be to slip into poverty
- Security measures at state buildings send negative message
- Chunk the issues, start somewhere
- Don't wait for an overall solution
- People can make better choices if they have good information
- Small steps are good
- Poverty can be a way of life due to choices not just a money thing
- What are all of the elements of poverty? Defining this would help with working on solutions
- Poverty can be a perception (relative poverty)
- Look at what other states have done for good models and things to avoid
- Identify and appreciate full service schools, and support them with resources and training
- All services need resources
- Need funding with focus and accountability
- Stop talking, act
- Make elimination of poverty in Vermont a priority, not just another issue
- Recognize that there is no magic bullet – families need different things
- Teach people life skills in a larger, more organized way, how to shop, parenting
- Empower people to help them want/feel confident that they can move out of poverty
- Media/consumer society defines “things” as success-this needs to change
- Use media system to get information out
- Work out boundary issues for services in “orphan” communities (Hardwick, Greensboro, Craftsbury)
- Get input from kids to see how they see poverty affecting them
- Create a “reverse” sanction system for Reach up (reward folks for who achieve/participate rather than penalty for not)
- Be more flexible in resources and include family input in what is needed
- Prevention
- Economic development that's “people – focused” (incentives for people)
- Rebuild the safety net, make it a positive thing
- 200% (and higher) of poverty level
- Whatever we do, let's make it sustainable and measure outcomes to know if they are working (choose an indicator or 2)

- Allow kids in poverty to tell their own stories and have broad experiences (gov. institutes, cameras, sister communities)
- Options for kids to stay in VT. Or get out of VT
- Teach problem solving as a strand throughout school
- People in poverty have a difficult time with things many take for granted, they become huge problems that start from a small thing, for example: car repairs, housing, garbage removal, laundry, meeting children's needs and wants
- Finding the joy in life when you are worried about food, shelter etc....
- Having bad credit makes it much more difficult to get housing, car loans, educational loans, utilities
- People in poverty constantly have their privacy violated, rude questions, this leads to self esteem issues, depression, how can we be more humane
- Almost everyone is one catastrophe away from living in poverty
- We need help for people who are struggling that don't have children at home
- We need to change the way our children are educated to reflect different learning styles to enhance school success
- Empty nursing home turned into homeless shelter and or food shelter
- Empty nursing home turned into therapeutic child care – would include early intervention services
- Individual family plan
- Minimum guaranteed income
- Fixed ceiling for housing costs
- Stop the war
- Family mentoring
- Neighbor keepers