

## **Vermont Child Poverty Council**

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion  
Questions and Answers  
Rutland County, Rutland  
November 19, 2007

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

- Divorce
- Drug abuse/ETOH-alcohol/addictions
- Domestic violence
- Generational poverty
- Incarceration
- Dropping out of school
- Poor health – physical/mental
- Loss of job/low pay job
- Having children at early age
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of child care
- Availability of affordable housing
- Lack of available jobs
- Fuel costs – heat and transportation
- Lack of education/job training
- Lack of child support
- Isolation/stigma of poverty/way of life
- Generational – don't have the vision of a better life
- Eligibility and lack of transitional benefits
- Poor nutritional choices
- Unsupported single parents with few skills
- Teen parent program funding lost – changed programs, not as comprehensive
- Services still somewhat siloed/fragmented
- Lack of enough early intervention, people caught in cycle of poverty
- Sense of entitlement
- Fear of losing benefits
- People use benefits as base, not supplement
- React to crisis, instead of preventing crisis
- Education – both academic and vocational, job skills
- Medical costs, lack of health insurance
- Business shut down
- Employment: losing/underemployed/low pay
- Health crisis

- Divorce/death of spouse
- Unexpected pregnancy
- Lack of education
- Cost of education
- Cost of health insurance
- Lack of a livable wage
- Cost of child care
- Cost of housing/lack of availability of good, safe housing
- Lack of nontraditional educational options for kids
- Lack of education
- Born into poverty
- Loss of jobs/low paying jobs/at-will state
- Lack of adequate transportation
- Lack of affordable housing
- Availability of drugs/substance abuse
- Lack of affordable health care
- Lack of affordable quality child care
- Job training starts too late
- Need for strength-based career assessment
- Need for retraining for people whose skills may have become obsolete
- Rural isolation
- Not seeking help soon enough, not knowing when to go for help
- Low income/employment opportunities (lack of) loss of employment, livable wages
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of education, cost, knowledge of resources, i.e. PSE program, training specific to jobs in area
- Generational poverty
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Single parent households
- Mental health issues
- Unaffordable housing
- Access to adequate child care quality
- Minimum wage/no livable wage
- Local economy is service job driven
- Transition from Reach Up, need incentives, no gaps
- Affordable housing
- Little public transportation, nothing in outlying areas, limited hours
- No child care nights and weekends
- Economic development needed
- Soft skills issues – vocational skills
- Jobs go to people from outside the area
- Homeless shelter – nothing for families in Rutland

- Untreated mental health and substance abuse issues
- Families cycle back, start to get ahead, then fall back
- Undiagnosed conditions
- Mental health group treatment not acceptable to all
- Lack of jobs
- Lack of education
- Substance abuse
- Cultural resistance – 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Loss of rural economy
- Mental health issues
- Domestic violence
- National tax policy
- Corporate policies affect pay benefits
- Underemployment
- Attitudes
- Generational issue

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

- Funding money to continue services, programs
- Educate citizens about fellow citizens who are living in poverty
- Updating the child care subsidy rate to today's standards
- Higher paying jobs
- Support groups for clients/consumers/Vermonters while they wait to get off the waiting list for services
- Build more subsidized housing/encourage more landlords to participate/recognize landlords who do participate/mentor for landlords
- Cheaper education/training
- Need to reassess limits on G.A.
- Meet basic needs
- Post secondary edu. program
- Expansion of community foodshelves
- WIC
- Create a business climate
- Family-centered services
- Livable wage jobs
- Coordinated case management
- Alternative office hours
- Child care availability
- Positive attitudes/communication
- Community forums/opportunities
- Subsidized housing
- Message from top that poverty is priority

- Support for success in families
- Mentoring
- Family and community inclusion in schools
- Global warming, et al.
- Help people make a step-by-step plan for independence, and supporting them through the whole process
- Nutrition value of food assistance needs to be better
- More good-paying jobs
- Outlaw rent-to-own businesses
- Develop affordable housing, smarter economic development
- Success in school at everyone's own level
- Mentoring
- Affordable health care
- Services need to have more realistic income limits and schedules, better transition from Reach up
- Eliminate unnecessary paperwork, make forms more understandable
- More community building
- Development of good work ethic
- Schools teach budgeting, making change, parenting, and other basic life skills
- Good jobs: gainful employment, better full-time jobs for those with little education, livable wage with benefits, incentives to work, transition programs, i.e. food stamps
- Educational opportunities, early education, training opportunities
- More affordable housing, more subsidies
- Eligibility policy to include transitional benefits
- Holistic treatment of families
- Earliest education opportunities – pre K
- Public education on how we will all be better off with less poverty
- Adequate funding for nutritional programs and parenting skills
- Use schools year-round for summer school programs
- Better school funding and social service funding
- Have the discussion about having school be more of a social service entry for the family
- More good day care provided by business
- Good paying jobs with higher min. wages
- Higher educational opportunities
- Encouragement, guidance in middle school to continue education beyond H.S.
- Magic
- More incentives to move off benefits, better transitions, no benefit cliff
- Mentors
- Flexible money for emergencies
- Low, no-interest loans

- Budget counseling
- Non-categorical case management not based on program enrollment
- Make benefits more appropriate to need. For example, general assistance hasn't kept up with costs
- Benefits counseling so people know the impact of working
- Affordable housing, with services
- More transportation funds
- Better car-pooling and ride sharing
- System/subsidized care loan/car repair program
- Training to help people get the skill they need to get off benefits

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

- Adequate nutrition
- Safe child care
- Family homeless shelter
- "Two" parent families – two responsible parents caring for children (not necessarily living together)
- Better enforcement of child support
- Ongoing support (having consumer access)
- More services/support for those who fall through the cracks
- Affordable quality child care
- Kids smile
- Kids who lived in foster care successfully age out of the system (with a driver's license, able to cook, do laundry, etc.)
- Family services, case managers follow up/communicate with clients
- Kids have someone to call/a lifelong connection
- Every child will be valued
- Paid parental leave (at least 4 months)
- Universal health care
- Local flexibility of program funding
- Employer incentives
- On-site child care (affordable)
- Family leave
- Children are ready to learn when at school
- Encourage/accept diversity in kids
- Charter schools
- Value people who are with children (teachers, etc.)
- Children have equal opportunities (school trips, music, sports)
- Families supported (beyond basic needs)
- Reduce disparities for children
- Adequate follow-up services after people stop receiving benefits

- No one would wait for a crisis to get help (more integrated services with community partners – fewer state, more in community)
- Children would pursue more interests (sports, arts, etc.)
- Parents and children engaged in community
- Children have dreams and can follow them
- More cross-agency services – anyone can provide some services, not based on programs and departments
- Families would be able to cook good, healthy food, not rely on prepared food
- Fewer jails
- More community service
- Good housing
- Table taxes (lower taxes)
- Everyone contributes to society
- Healthier, save on medical costs
- Kids happier
- Better roads and bridges
- Better workforce, more clean, green business come to the state
- More cohesive families
- Less stress – less mental health pxs, less addiction
- Equal opportunities
- More time to enjoy their beautiful State of Vermont
- No shame
- No stigma
- More summer programs
- Improved academic performance
- More economic development
- Improved nutrition
- More and better paying jobs
- No homeless families
- Everyone has enough of what they need (food, fuel, clothes, etc.)
- When you walk into a classroom, you wouldn't know who was receiving assistance
- Better mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Fewer people incarcerated
- Halfway housing for young parents and people released from corrections etc. and gradual move to independence
- People don't have to leave Vermont for better job
- More public transportation
- Teaching self-sufficiency
- Affordable housing
- Positive incentive to work, transitional subsidies
- See children stable in home and school, same home and school all year
- All basic needs met

- Lower incidence of substance abuse and crime
- Every parent under 21 has mentor for first year of baby's life
- Bridges out of poverty for all
- Livable wage for all
- Health care – including dental – for all
- No need for support programs
- No one is hungry
- Encourage independence and interdependency
- Accountability for all
- Strong communities
- Children's needs are placed above others
- Strong public education
- More ways to finance higher education

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

- Coordination/cooperation between agencies, schools, services
- Recalculate Reach Up grants to meet economic needs of clients
- More public discussion/education/learning about each other
- Finding a way to destigmatize people living in poverty
- Should 50% be the goal? Maybe intermediate goals, i.e. 20% in 4 years to closely supervise the results
- Streamlined funding with simpler reporting requirements – match reports to amount of funding
- Services driven by families who use them
- Support groups for families (peer support)
- Have families who have “graduated” from system mentor/support families who are new to system
- Take stigma out of poverty (like Electronic Benefit Transfers to an ATM-like card)
- More money in prevention – less in reaction. Investment vs. reactionary spending
- Merge/consolidate/coordinate. For example, 6 agencies in Rutland have something to do with housing
- Creative strategies to help families maintain progress
- Universal health care
- Financial education curriculum in schools (universal, at young age)
- Look at wage differential
- Have higher-up officials actually sit in on front-line staff interactions with families. Hearing about issues is not the same as seeing it first hand
- Fear that next few years will be very rough
- Face-to-face meetings work
- Leaders need to listen

- Poverty is a community problem
- Community members need to take leadership roles
- Stop blaming
- Recognize there will probably not be more money, we need to use what we have more effectively
- Better quality of food (i.e. school lunches)
- Need transitional housing for youth
- Mandatory non-military national service
- Expansion of job corps for Vt. youth
- Utilize lot buying for commodities
- All people see themselves as part of solution
- Study what happened in '90's that got welfare levels down; produce statistics showing economic conditions/how much money spent for providing TANF
- Revamp corrections system
- Stop sending our inmates out of State of Vermont, policies and protocols for arrest when children are present
- More halfway houses
- More single room occupancy dwellings (SROs)
- Economic development
- Keep farms viable (small family farms)
- Viable drug abuse treatment
- No stigma to being poor
- Love the pre K
- Love the Headstart model to treat the whole family
- Love Tapestry and Boys and Girls club
- Do affordable housing this year
- How many kids are hungry in each town each day? Publish it
- War funding to domestic spending