

## **Vermont Child Poverty Council**

Public Forum Roundtable Discussion  
Questions and Answers  
Caledonia County, St. Johnsbury  
November 20, 2007

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

- Interrupted education
- Domestic Violence
- Low self esteem
- Loss of jobs and lack of variety of jobs
- Cost escalations – increase of housing costs, energy, food
- Generational poverty
- New catastrophic, divorce, medical
- Substance abuse
- Transportation
- Child care
- Mental health and substance abuse treatment
- “safety net”
- Lifetime section 8
- Flexible education system
- Lack of life skills
- Generational poverty
- No “alternatives”
- Low wage jobs with limited advancement
- “Cliffs”
- Mental health
- Fear
- Stigmas
- Hard choices “what to give up”
- Fuel, home, auto
- Time
- Education
- Costs of transportation (auto)
- Limited public transportation not family friendly
- High service costs
- Lack of education
- Kids pushed out of homes with no extended family care
- Lack of money and resources
- Economic downturn

- Cost of everything; heat, utilities, rent, fuel, mortgage, transportation, child care
- Domestic Violence – fleeing, divorce, disability – pick a “D” word (depression, doubt, dismay, despair)
- Education system “writes off” low income kids
- Low parental involvement, parents don’t know how or have time to advocate
- No other resources for care/living situations
- Low wage jobs, no jobs (that fit), lack of entry to jobs (closed doors)
- Co-pays for all services that require them
- Inflexibility within programs or systems need exceptions
- Programs are problem focused rather than strength based
- Low wages
- Job security
- Housing costs
- Lack of education
- Generational poverty
- Hopelessness
- Child care costs
- Transportation barriers
- Inconstant political leadership
- Stigma of poverty
- Illness, lack of health care
- Mental illness
- Domestic violence
- Situational event (loss of job, Domestic Violence)
- Lack of communication
- Inequality between actual wages and cost of living
- Lack of education
- Citizenship, requirement
- Income guidelines for various programs (similar to situation one panel member spoke of)
- Distribution of wealth in our society
- Lack of education
- Medical emergency or another emergency
- Lack of jobs that pay a livable wage
- Mental health issues (unaddressed)
- Providing child care for their children
- Lack of vision of what success looks like
- Substance abuse
- Transportation – the rural area
- Expensive life costs, gas, house
- Domestic abuse
- Health insurance issues, including being underinsured

- Choosing between working and benefits
- Lack of communication –lack of supportive relationships that help move toward success
- Fear of the unknown
- Not wanting to get “help”
- Lack of relationships from the helping agencies
- Not enough transition time from assistance to work with benefits
- Substance abuse of any kind
- Lack of relationships for - children and adults
- Geographic isolation
- Lack of treatment options
- Lack of opportunity
- People isolate

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

- Education –career plan
- Systems--flexibility/push the rules...need to listen to story
- Graduated support to eliminate cliffs
- Save – affordable housing
- Job skill building – readiness
- High school tech training
- Alternative education
- Drug treatment
- Transition housing DOC, youth, families, MH
- Non-categorical case management
- Transportation – public
- Minimum wage, livable wage
- MH – SVCS
- Budgeting classes
- Education
- Parenting skills, support
- Good government
- Pathways to employment which are skill-specific--specific steps to health care, job
- Transitional services
- Reduce “cliffs”
- Job skills training
- One-on-one budget counseling
- Career/education counseling
- “No wrong door” navigator
- Interagency communication

- Make 360 grant work
- Universal education
- Training
- Job skills
- Guaranteed annual income
- College tuition for every Vt. youth
- Support systems (teen-parent program)
- Mentoring
- Wrap-around support system
- Service coordination
- Navigation
- Transportation (upkeep)
- Affordable housing
- Substance/mental health counseling
- Livable wage jobs
- Health insurance
- Adequate affordable quality child care
- Money
- Jobs that pay better/livable wage
- Creative flexibility within programs/systems
- Decent, affordable housing (built by prisoners and moved off site)
- More work camps (Charlotte says so), fewer jails
- More and more creative transitional services for: youth coming out of custody, people coming out of incarceration, people coming off public assistance, people coming out of residential TX
- Greater availability of nontraditional educational services when and where people can access them
- Greater access to college for low income and working class
- More affordable insurance to address health – improve access issues
- Assist people to fill out forms and make them simpler and less numerous
- Universal health care
- Livable wage
- Subsidized child care
- Get rid of benefit “cliffs”
- Longer transition periods
- Having mentors to goals
- Having success at school
- Avoiding interruptions in schools
- Higher education
- Affordable housing
- Mental health--accessible
- Supports during transitions – including incentives
- Helping families celebrate their success
- Changing how we look at poverty--a community issue

- Redistribute the wealth

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

- Health and mental health, dental, vision, parental support
- Enough housing –choice
- Poverty council does not have a job
- Mentors
- Connections before crisis/fall
- Multiple type of jobs and way to get there
- Economic development
- Education
- Social capital happens
- Every person has a mentor/connection
- Full belly
- Social services aren't so black and white (e.g. flexibility in rules)
- Enough child care
- Health care – providers
- Being able to meet “your” needs
- Children are provided with more than just essentials
- Social and educational equality
- Affordable extracurricular/recreation opportunities
- Livable wages for everyone
- SSDI – adequate support for those on disability
- Affordable, adequate child care when needed, as needed
- That kids can be carefree kids
- That children are safe and hopeful
- That kids aren't hungry
- Safe homes for kids
- Stable adults as role models
- That children have a sense of their future, hope to realize their dreams
- Generational upward mobility
- Every child receiving the same and best opportunities that our system/community can offer
- High expectations for all children alike
- Love (healthy) attention
- Happy kids that can pay attention because they aren't hungry and other kids aren't making fun of them and they have a vision, or a number of visions for who they are and what they will be doing when they grow up
- People feel like they have choices
- People can set and attain goals
- People have fun and enjoy life
- Don't have to worry about the day-to-day struggles

- Keep the good public assets, SCHIP, public schools
- Public policies well coordinated and integrated in order to solve problems rather than create them
- Children allowed to be children (as panel member states)
- Basic needs are a right, food, housing, heat
- Children believe there is a future
- Access to services year-round, not just during the school year
- Children are a witness to positive familial relationships
- Children are able to spend time, recreation, vacations with their parents
- Families and community thrive
- People believe in themselves
- Prevention happens
- Sufficient funds to live
- Children are active, engaged, cared for and loved
- Services are adequate – no waiting lists
- Everyone has friends/supports
- Equal access to home, food, job, health education, relationships
- Less stress

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

- Please fix teen – parent education
- Increase funding for collaboration
- Higher education more affordable
- Focus on prevention
- Build more flexibility into social prog.
- VSAC career developer in every school
- Need action
- Listen to the people
- Be creative – allow experiment
- State review contracts, outsource
- Better customer service in government
- Program stability
- Give programs time to work
- Client-oriented services
- Rethink how we measure success
- That poverty is visible
- More emphasis on prevention
- Creativity in solving issues
- Realizing the goals of the AHS reorganization
- Community awareness and changing attitudes toward poverty

- Assistance for “start-up” costs of living
- Council needs concrete suggestion
- Participation of folks receiving benefit/services on the council
- Grow mentoring programs for all age groups – fund longer
- Incorporate more service learning into schools, help all kids feel more connected to community
- Kids need more transitional supported housing that teach life skills
- People in positions of leadership cultivating an attitude/atmosphere of giving/volunteerism
- People stop blaming poor people for being poor
- Tap resources of aging population to mentor, teach, care
- What will happen with this information?
- What is the next step?
- Mission/charge of council
- The issues of poverty are larger than those who are in poverty – it is bigger – it affects more and it is also widening
- Income gap is widening – even in the kingdom (second homes for example) and large homes
- Invite at least 2 parent representatives to join the council to provide the “rubber hits the road’ perspective to any initiatives for potential solutions by them before implementing them
- Find other ways to gather information from those in poverty to assist in planning – find ways to gather their perspective