



NEWS RELEASE

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One in Ten Connecticut Children in Poverty

One in four children in families struggling with self-sufficiency

One in ten children in Connecticut live in poverty, according to a new analysis of Census data from Connecticut Voices for Children, a policy and advocacy organization for children and families. In 2001-2002, 10.2% of children and youth in the state lived in poverty, up slightly from 10.0% in 1999-2000. The latest data are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) gathered by the U.S. Census in March 2003. Connecticut's child poverty rate compares favorably to other states, and is the sixth lowest in the United States. However, the report, *Child Poverty and Poverty Measures in Connecticut*, argues that official federal poverty measures underestimate the number of children in poor and economically struggling working families.

Federal poverty measures, originally developed in the 1960s, are outdated and underestimate the amount of income necessary for a family to meet its essential needs, according to the report. Not only do the federal poverty thresholds fail to reflect regional differences in costs of living, they also omit certain costs that now typically require large portions of working families' income, such as costs for child care.

A better measure of how well family incomes are meeting family needs is Connecticut's self-sufficiency standard. This measure, developed by the state's Office of Policy and Management, estimates the income needed to support different family types based on the local cost of living for housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and taxes. Since the standard varies across Connecticut, it is difficult to precisely calculate the number of children living below it. Approximately one in four children live in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold, a rough statewide average of the Connecticut self-sufficiency standard.

"There is a major difference between being above the federal poverty level and being able to support a family in Connecticut," said Priscilla Canny, Director of Research at Connecticut Voices for Children. "A full-time job at minimum wage would not raise a family above the poverty level, much less make them self-sufficient," added Douglas Hall, Policy Fellow.

CT Self-Sufficiency Standard for Single Parent Family with One Infant and One School-Aged Child (in 2002 dollars)		
Region	Average annual income needed for economic self-sufficiency	Federal Poverty Threshold
Hartford	\$37,123	\$14,494
Middletown	\$37,682	\$14,494
Northeast	\$38,362	\$14,494
Bristol	\$38,588	\$14,494
Waterbury	\$38,988	\$14,494
New Haven	\$39,281	\$14,494
Southeast Region	\$39,760	\$14,494
Torrington	\$39,787	\$14,494
Danbury	\$42,398	\$14,494
Old Saybrook	\$42,717	\$14,494
Bridgeport	\$45,128	\$14,494
Stamford-Norwalk	\$52,254	\$14,494

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is one of several measures of poverty developed by the Census Bureau. While four of these estimates for 2000-2002 are fairly close, at other times they may vary more because of differences in methodology. The report outlines some of these differences.

To help working families become more financially secure, the report recommends some proven methods:

- family support initiatives, such as subsidies for early care and education, housing, and health care
- a state-level earned income tax credit that offers tax refunds for working families (similar to the tax credits offered in all of our neighboring states)
- support for education and training for working adults and parents

“The good news is that we know what works in helping families become more economically secure. As the state with the nation’s highest per capita income, we also have the resources to help our kids. Unfortunately, cuts to the state budget are hurting the very programs that work best for kids,” said Shelley Geballe, Co-President of Connecticut Voices for Children. “It will cost us less to invest in programs that help children succeed now, rather than paying for the problems that will happen if we don’t.”

Connecticut Voices for Children is a statewide, research-based policy and advocacy organization committed to promoting leadership, policy change, and investment on behalf of all of Connecticut’s children and youth.

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