

The 2013 Platform

OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE: *Campaign to End Child Poverty*

1. Health Care for 120,000+ Working Families

Goal: Win Medicaid Expansion up to 138 percent of the poverty line for all West Virginians.

How does this affect child poverty: Children are poor because their parents are poor. Medicaid Expansion would provide an enormous benefit to 100,000+ working poor parents making between roughly \$6k and \$26k per year, effectively lifting many of them out of poverty, allowing them to stay at work, and freeing up family resources for food, child care, rent, and other basic necessities. West Virginia would only pay 10 percent of this federally funded program, which we will more than save on emergency room costs.

2. Protect Family Violence Prevention

Goal: Protect and increase funding for efforts to prevent family violence in West Virginia including the Children's Trust Fund, Child Advocacy Centers, and Domestic Violence Programs.

How does this affect child poverty: Experts have established links between poverty and an increase in domestic violence and child maltreatment, and children in poverty have an increased level of vulnerability when it comes to community protective factors that can either prevent abuse or help children begin to heal when abuse has occurred. In addition, many experts, such as Dr. Robert Anda of the CDC and Dr. David Finklehor of UNH's Crimes Against Children Center, have described family violence and other childhood adversities as a "pathway to poverty."

3. Stop Child Care Cuts

Goal: Support the Governor's pledge to find long-term solutions to protect Child Care benefits for working families earning up to 185% of the poverty line.

How does this affect child poverty: Without adequate funding to subsidize child care, many struggling families face the difficult decision of continuing employment or higher education and seeking substandard childcare from well-intentioned, but unqualified help or dropping out of the job market to take care of their children. Child care cuts would hurt employment and put kids at greater risk, perpetuating the cycle of generational poverty.

4. Healthy Foods in Your School

Goal: Promote a Healthy Foods agenda that includes: expanding Healthy Foods Programs to at least 5 new schools and/or school districts (school gardens, farm to school, summer school, afterschool meals, student advisory councils, soft drink policies, etc.) and pass legislation restricting soft drinks in schools.

How does this affect child poverty: Obesity and poor health hurts life chances, and kids need good foods to be productive in school.

5. Bi-Partisan Prison Reform to Cut Waste

Goal: Pass bi-partisan legislation to address prison overcrowding and rampant over-spending on corrections.

How does this affect child poverty: It costs ~\$27,000/year to incarcerate an adult – about 5 times the cost of providing top-notch child care for a child in need. A bi-partisan commission has developed a plan to reduce incarceration by implementing tested, cost-saving policies (like required substance abuse programs) that reduce recidivism and increase public safety. Money saved in prisons can be spent on prevention... and by helping a parent break the cycle of crime, we help the child avoid the same fate.



The Our Children, Our Future: Campaign to End Child Poverty arrived at these issues through a 6-month statewide community organizing process that included 48 community meetings at churches, schools, community centers, prisons, businesses, and unions; and more than 200 meetings with our partners, ranging from the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce and the West Virginia AFL-CIO to legislators, Bishops, and agency directors. Through extensive research and strategy, we narrowed our work down to 17 possible initiatives, and then held a statewide vote amongst all of our partners.

We will take action on this platform at our Kids and Families Day at the Capitol on February 26th, and at 11 Regional Forums this spring. To reserve a bus or a table for Kids and Families Day, contact Stephen Smith at ssmith@wvhealthykids.org.

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In addition to playing a leadership role on the Top 5 statewide priorities, we are also supporting local and regional efforts on the following issues in 2013.

#6: Expanding Truancy Programs that Work

Goal: Expand truancy prevention programs into new counties by 1. securing at least current funding levels for Truancy Diversion projects like dropout prevention and Innovation Zone; 2. engage in available grant opportunities, 3. encourage other new programs (including re-establishing the Truancy Diversion Social Work Program – proposed by NASW).

How does this effect child poverty: A diploma opens doors and opportunities for children and helps to overcome obstacles created by growing up in poverty.

#7: Parent Leadership and Mutual Support

Goal: To collaborate with local partners to pilot at least 5 on-going, parent-led parent education and support programs.

How does this effect child poverty: Educating and supporting parents, especially new parents, is one of the best investments we can make. Right now, many groups around the state (Healthy Kids on Oral and Child Health, Circle of Parents, the Circles Campaign) are experimenting with these programs, or considering doing so. We should encourage others to join in and share knowledge and information about what is working.

#8: Teen Mothers

Goal: Funding for Community Health Centers to provide hours more convenient for students; and requiring PEIA and Medicaid to provide oral and basic health benefits for pregnant women.

How does this effect child poverty: Provides opportunity for youth to complete education and lowers health risks for mothers, teen mothers, and their children at crucial times in their lives.

#9: Expand Health Services Statewide

Goal: Increase community based health, dental and mental health services to every county in WV through the use of evidence based models such as Expanded School Mental Health and School-based Health Centers.

How does this effect child poverty: Physical, dental and mental health is crucial to ensure WV children are ready to learn and able to succeed. Through these models, the community is working together to ensure the basic needs as well as the physical, dental and mental health is addressed in a holistic manner.

#10: Stop Doctors from Over-Prescribing

Goal: Raise awareness and pass state level legislation to give law enforcement more power to investigate and press charges against doctors who over-prescribe pain medications.

How does this effect child poverty: Prescription drug abuse leads to a wide range of bad outcomes for kids and the parents of young children.

*For more information about our Regional Forums in **Raleigh, Wood, Brooke/Hancock, Marshall/Ohio, Berkeley/Jefferson/Morgan, Upshur, Logan/Boone, Cabell/Wayne, Mon/Harrison/Marrion/Taylor, Mingo, and Kanawha** Counties, please visit www.wvhealthykids.org or contact Stephen Smith at ssmith@wvhealthykids.org.*

This campaign is barely beginning. It will take us years to turn around our child poverty crisis, and we need your help. If you are interested in becoming involved in our community organizing efforts now, or in the future, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

