



Our Children, Our Future 2014 Policy Proposals

INVESTING IN EDUCATION

Piecing Together the Puzzle on Teen Pregnancy in West Virginia

Goal: Provide state funding for professional education opportunities for health and physical education educators.

Leaders: Lida Shepherd, American Friends Service Committee
Pam Van Horn, Planned Parenthood Health Systems
Rachel Huff, WV FREE

Affect on Child Poverty: Evidence shows youth who receive accurate information about healthy choices, are less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors. Reducing teen pregnancy and improving health outcomes increases chances of teens finishing high school and entering the workforce allowing them to better prepare for the future.

Contact: Lida Shepherd at lshenberd@afsc.org, Pam VanHorn via pamela.vanhorn@pphs.org, or Rachel Huff via Rachel@wvfree.org

In-Home Family Education Programs

Goal: Establish a statewide system of early childhood home visitation.

Leaders: Jim McKay, Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia
Michele Baranaskas, Partners in Community Outreach

Affect on Child Poverty: Home visiting has many benefits to improve children's lives including increasing their chances for early school success and eventual high school graduation, which in turn enhances their employment and earnings potential.

Contact: Jim McKay via jim@teamwv.org or Michele Baranaskas via michele@wvpartners.org

Expanding Minds, The Synergy of Afterschool

Goal: Allocate funding for afterschool education.

Leaders: Gayle Manchin, West Virginia State Board of Education
Chris Kimes, West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network

Affect on Child Poverty: Afterschool is a major vehicle in uplifting youth out of poverty through an increase in high school graduation rates, college attainment levels, and a drop in truancy rates.

Contact: Chris Kimes via chris.kimes@mail.wvu.edu

Our Kids Need Physical Activity and Recess

Goal: Increase physical activity and quality physical education K-8.

Leaders: Jamie Jeffery, M.D., Keys 4 Healthy Kids
Emily Murphy, Obesity Prevention, West Virginia University Extension Service
Laura Dive, Keys 4 Healthy Kids

Affect on Child Poverty: Children and families who live in poverty have less access to healthy foods, transportation and physical activity. Following, they are disproportionately affected by obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Physical activity in children is a proven primary prevention strategy to prevent these risk factors and thereby preventing disease.

Contact: Jamie Jeffery via jamie.jeffrey@camc.org or Emily Murphy via Emily.murphy@mail.wvu.edu

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

Increasing Access to Healthy Foods

Goal: Promote WV farmers markets providing healthy, local food and lift barriers inhibiting food pantries from accepting fresh food donations.

Leaders: Savanna Lyons, West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
Linda Bunn, AARP West Virginia

Affect on Child Poverty: Poor access to fresh healthy food is not only part of the experience of poverty, but it is also essential part of the *cycle* of poverty. The eating habits that we form as kids impact us for the rest of our lives, not only by determining our metabolic biochemistry and the composition of our bodies, but also by setting up the way we think about and interact with food as adults.

Contact: Savanna Lyons via s.lyons@wvhub.org or Linda Bunn via lbunn@aarp.org

Removing Soft Drinks from SNAP Benefits

Goal: Be the first state to remove soft drinks from SNAP benefits.

Leaders: Richard Wittberg, Mid-Ohio Healthy Department
Dana Singer, Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department
MaryBeth Shea, Mid-Ohio Health Department

Affect on Child Poverty: Allowing a program with potential to reduce poverty and improve health to subsidize poor food choices, rather than nourishing vulnerable populations perpetuates the cycle of poverty resulting in poor health outcomes (especially oral health outcomes) and inhibits participants ability to create healthier and more productive lives.

Contact: Dana Singer via dana.j.singer@wv.gov, Richard Wittberg via richard.a.wittberg@wv.gov, or MaryBeth Shea via marybeth.e.shea@wv.gov

Medicaid Enrollment

Goal: Promote Medicaid enrollment and educating state residents on Medicaid benefits.

Leaders: Brandon Merritt, West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy
Renate Pore, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

Affects on Child Poverty: Children who grow up in households with parents who are also protected by health insurance are less likely to end up in poverty than children with uninsured parents who may face serious financial difficulties as a result of illness.

Contact: Brandon Merritt via bmerritt@wvpolicy.org or Renate Pore via renatepore@gmail.com

Substance Abuse Treatment

Goal: Implement a Medicaid reimbursement mechanism for Peer Support Specialists and Recovery Coaches.

Leaders: Reverend James Patterson, Partnership for African American Churches
Margaret O'Neal, United Way of Southern West Virginia

Affect on Child Poverty: It will expand the work force and provide peer support service to individuals with substance addictions allowing them to transition into society, become better functioning parents, and families.

Contact: Reverend Patterson via patterson@paac2.org or Margaret O'Neal via moneal@unitedwayswv.org

GROWING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Workforce Development

Goal: Establish a Pilot Workforce Development Job Training & Job Placement Project to increase workforce participation among parents of poor children with a specific target of 16 - 24 year old unemployed parents in Kanawha County.

Leaders: Reverend Matthew J. Watts, HOPE Community Development Corporation

Senator John Unger, Chairman Senate Select Committee on Child Poverty, Senate Majority Leader

Mr. Robert Hardy, Charleston Economic & Community Development Corp.

Mr. Kenneth Hale, Charleston Branch NAACP

Affect on Child Poverty: Poor children live in poverty because their parents are either unemployed, under-employed and often lack the skills to obtain a livable wage job. The key to moving children out of poverty is to improve the employability and employment outcomes opportunities for the parents of poor children.

Contact: Reverend Watts via hopewdc@aol.com

Increasing the Minimum Wage

Goal: Increasing the minimum wage and indexing to account for inflation.

Leaders: Sean O'Leary, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

Jennifer Thacker, West Virginia Alliance for Sustainable Families

Josh Sword, West Virginia AFL-CIO

Affect on Child Poverty: 25% of children in WV live in a household with at least one parent who earns the minimum wage. 20% of minimum wage earners are their families' sole source of income. The current minimum wage is insufficient to keep a minimum wage earner's family out of poverty.

Contact: Sean O'Leary via solarey@wvpolicy.org, Jennifer Thacker via jthacker@t-cassocites.org, or Josh Sword via jsword@wvafclcio.org

Community Revitalization

Goal: To establish the West Side Revitalization Transformation Project (West Side Revive) on the West Side of Charleston as a Demonstration - Pilot Project to address child poverty in the context of a low-income community with concentrated child and family poverty.

Leaders: Reverend Matthew J. Watts, HOPE CDC

Mr. Robert "Bob" Hardy, Charleston Economic & Community Development Corp.

Mr. Kenneth Hale, Charleston Branch NAACP

Mr. Robert Hardy, Charleston Economic & Community Development Corp.

Affect on Child Poverty: By addressing poverty in the context of comprehensive community development, child poverty will be alleviated in the short term by improving employment opportunities and housing, while improving educational outcomes for children leading to jobs with livable wages. Finally, improving the overall quality of life of the community will make it a desirable place for the children to live and to raise their families after they become adults.

Contact: Reverend Watts via hopewdc@aol.com

Economic Diversification: From a Culture of Poverty to a Culture of Entrepreneurship

Goal: Encourage economic diversification in Southern West Virginia.

Leaders: Steve Kominar, Mingo County Redevelopment Authority

Peni Adams, McDowell Economic Development Authority

Eric Mathis, Sustainable Williamson

Affect on Child Poverty: By providing a robust *entrepreneurial eco-system* we can generate local wealth in turn rebuilding the institutional landscape (e.g., schools) to decrease child poverty.

Contact: Eric Mathis via joseph.eric.mathis@gmail.com or Peni Adams via peni.adams@mcdowelleda.com

STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

Affordable Housing: Quality Homes, Quality Jobs Act

Goal: To enact the Quality Homes, Quality Jobs Initiative a proposal to combine affordable housing development with on-the-job training for 16-24-year-olds.

Leaders: Brandon Dennison, Coalfield Development Corporation

Reggie Jones, PRIDE Community Services

Mary Skeens, Community Works in West Virginia

Dave Clarke, Woodland Development Group

Affect on Child Poverty: By providing safe, affordable homes for families in poverty, we will create the firm foundation needed for academic achievement and professional success. Evidence is clear. Secure housing scenarios generate increased odds for success in the classroom and in the workplace for low-income children and adults.

Contact: Brandon Dennison via bdennison@coalfield-development.org

Paying It Forward: A Future Fund for West Virginia

Goal: Creation of a permanent mineral trust fund or Future Fund from natural resource severance taxes.

Leaders: Rick Wilson, American Friends Service Committee

Misty Peal, West Virginia Education Association

Affect on Child Poverty: Without a plan for the future, we are likely to continue to experience a lack of economic diversity, cycles of boom and bust, and poor economic outcomes. Unless we break that pattern, many of today's children will face diminished opportunities and tomorrow's children will suffer for it.

Contact: Rick Wilson via rwilson@afsc.org or Misty Peal via mpeal@wvea.org

Giving Credit to West Virginia's Working Families: A State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for West Virginia

Goal: To pass a State Earned Income Tax Credit for working families.

Leaders: Ted Boettner, West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy

Ed Davis, United Way

Affect on Child Poverty: A 10 to 20 percent refundable state EITC would bring an additional \$33-\$66 million to working families to help them pay off debt, finance transportation to work, invest in education, and buy basic necessities.

Contact: Ted Boettner via tboettner@wvpolicy.org

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

From Services to Systems: Foster Care Reform

Goal: Reduce the number of children in out of home foster care placements by adopting a systemic approach to services.

Leaders: Angie Hamilton, Pressley Ridge
Steve Tuck, Children's Home Society

Affect on Child Poverty: Foster Care and child poverty are cyclical issues. Not only do the majority of youth entering foster care come from families struggling with poverty, research suggests out of home placement increases the likelihood of youth experiencing poverty as an adult. By creating a network of supports to service children within their homes, we can improve outcomes for both youth and their families.

Contact: Angie Hamilton via ahamilton@pressleyridge.org or Steve Tuck via stuck@childhswv.org

Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative

Goal: Reduce unnecessary incarceration of youth who do not pose safety risks by promoting community-based alternatives.

Leaders: Paul Sheridan, ACLU of West Virginia
Senator William Laird

Affect on Child Poverty: Youth living in poverty are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. Studies have shown youth placed in secure facilities are less likely to finish high school or get a job, decreasing their chances of lifting themselves out of poverty. By serving children in their communities rather than secure facilities, we can improve outcomes for children while increasing supports for their families.

Contact: Paul Sheridan via psheridan@acluwv.org

Prison Reform

Goal: Increase community based treatment options for non-violent offenders.

Leaders: Mr. Kenneth E. Hale, Charleston Branch NAACP
Reverend James Ealy, Tuesday Morning Group
Reverend Matthew J. Watts, HOPE CDC

Affect on Child Poverty: Nearly 7,000 children have an incarcerated parent. These are among the poorest children in America, often trapped in a cycle of poverty because their parents are unable to find employment after they are released from prison. 70 % of these children will end up in prison.

Contact: Reverend Watts via hopewdc@aol.com