

Poverty Elimination Strategies that Work

A human rights tool kit for addressing
poverty in your community

*A report of the
From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign:
Realizing Human Rights in Illinois*

January 2010



About the Publisher

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights is a service-based human rights organization advancing the human rights and responding to the human needs of endangered populations – particularly the poor, the isolated, and the displaced – through the provision of comprehensive and respectful services and the promotion of permanent solutions leading to a more just global society.

Acknowledgements

The following individuals provided invaluable support to the content and editing of this publication: Kate Ritter, Alicia Huguelet, Bob Palmer, Kathy Chan, Cheryl Vanderford, Andrea Ray, Alyssa Nogaski, Megan Erskine, Ric Martel, Amy Terpstra, Amy Rynell, Melissa Young, Alison Leipsiger, Chris Giangreco, Chris Warland, Gina Guillemette, Doug Schenkelberg, Matt Weis, John Dinauer, Carrie Thomas, Sean Noble, Lore Baker, Sid Mohn, and Joe Antolin.

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How to Use this Report

*We, the People of the State of Illinois...in order to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the people; maintain a representative and orderly government; **eliminate poverty and inequality**; assure legal, social and economic justice; provide opportunity for the fullest development of the individual;...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the State of Illinois.*

Constitution of the State of Illinois, Preamble

Poverty Elimination Strategies that Work provides snapshots of eight issue areas that contribute to poverty, examples of local strategies for addressing poverty, and resources for implementing local solutions, with a special emphasis placed on extreme poverty. This report is intended to help policymakers, community groups, foundations, service providers, advocates, and faith communities identify, support, and promote proven poverty elimination strategies that meet the needs of the individuals and families experiencing poverty in their communities.

Included are numerous local solutions that are currently being implemented in communities around the state and the country. These examples are meant to serve as a catalyst for local planning to create solutions that leverage a community's assets to fundamentally address poverty. Whenever possible, hyperlinks to sources are included that contain additional information about a given solution. All local solutions marked by arrows indicate links to additional resources that may be useful in developing and implementing poverty elimination strategies locally.

The diagram illustrates how to use links within the report. It features a large rectangular box containing two entries. The first entry is a blue hyperlink: [Explore Master Lease Arrangements](#). To its left, an arrow points from the text 'Resource Link' to the link. The second entry is a blue hyperlink: [The Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative](#). To its left, an arrow points from the text 'Specific Program Model Link' to the link. Both entries include a brief description of the program or resource.

Resource Link

[Explore Master Lease Arrangements](#) to provide emergency housing for people in crisis as well as supportive housing to people with disabilities in a scattered site setting. SHELTER, Inc.'s Masterleasing Program places single, chronically homeless adults in permanent supportive housing directly from the streets and shelters. SHELTER, Inc. identifies privately owned apartment units, negotiates leases with landlords, and contracts with organizations to provide on-site support services.

Specific Program Model Link

[The Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative](#) in DC builds relationships with landlords to allow flexibility for security deposits, payments, etc. Housing locators work with landlord and client to make each party feel comfortable. Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative has a good reputation in the community, allowing for landlords to have more trust in their clients housing situation.

Keep in mind that many of the recommendations outlined in this report will require significant investments and partnerships with local or state government and/or other community stakeholders as well as consultation with experts and connections with existing resources to expand local opportunities.

Eliminating poverty is no easy task. While implementing any one of the solutions outlined in this report alone may have a small impact on overall poverty rates in a given community, the impact on individual lives can be profound and implementing a variety of these approaches together can have a substantial impact. At the same time, capturing the best practices of local solutions to inform policy and systems change can multiply impact toward the goal of eliminating poverty. Starting today we can all do our part to bring our communities, our counties, and our state one step closer to the goal of poverty elimination through collective advocacy and through the implementation of local solutions.

We welcome opportunities to work with you to advocate for policy and systems change and to advance poverty elimination strategies that work.

Why Poverty is a Human Rights Issue

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25

Poverty is the absence of human rights. It robs individuals of those human rights listed above, as well as many others – the right to self-determination, the right to work, the right to education. Tackling the difficult issue of poverty requires us to recognize this dynamic and adjust our tactics.

A comprehensive vision and plan is needed to ensure that the human rights of all Illinoisans are realized. This vision requires action on many levels – federal, state, local, and individual. Human rights are not just about what our government does, but also about how we treat each other in our communities. While our policies need to be adjusted to ensure everyone has equal opportunity and has their dignity affirmed, just as important is the work we do in our local communities everyday that responds to the needs of those impacted by poverty and engages them in the development and adoption of solutions.

Poverty and Extreme Poverty in Illinois

Poverty is defined by the federal government using an income threshold, also called the poverty line, which varies by family size. A family of three is considered poor if their annual income is below \$18,310, and a family of four is considered poor with an annual income below \$22,050.¹

Among those living in poverty is a subset of people who live in the most dire form of poverty – extreme poverty. Extreme poverty means living with an annual income below half the poverty line (also called below 50 percent FPL) – less than \$9,155 for a family of three and less than \$11,025 for a family of four in 2009². At this very low-income level, families do not have near enough money to pay for the most basic of their needs, such as housing, food, health care, and clothing. This results in families making untenable tradeoffs and going without certain needs being met.

In Illinois³:

- **667,026** people live in **extreme poverty**
- **234,147 children** live in extreme poverty
- **1,532,238** people live in **poverty**
- **525,880 children** live in poverty

Income Poverty: 2009 Federal Poverty Level (FPL)		
Family Size	Income Guideline 100% FPL	Income Guideline 50% FPL
1	\$10,830	\$5,415
2	\$14,570	\$7,285
3	\$18,310	\$9,155
4	\$22,050	\$11,025

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009). *The 2009 HHS Poverty Guidelines*. Retrieved March 27, 2009, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml>

Extreme or Deep Poverty: living below 50% FPL

People in extreme poverty are⁴...

More likely to have a **disability**
 More likely to live in **linguistically isolated** households
 More likely to **not speak English**
 More likely to have an **incomplete kitchen or plumbing**
 More likely to live in **older housing**

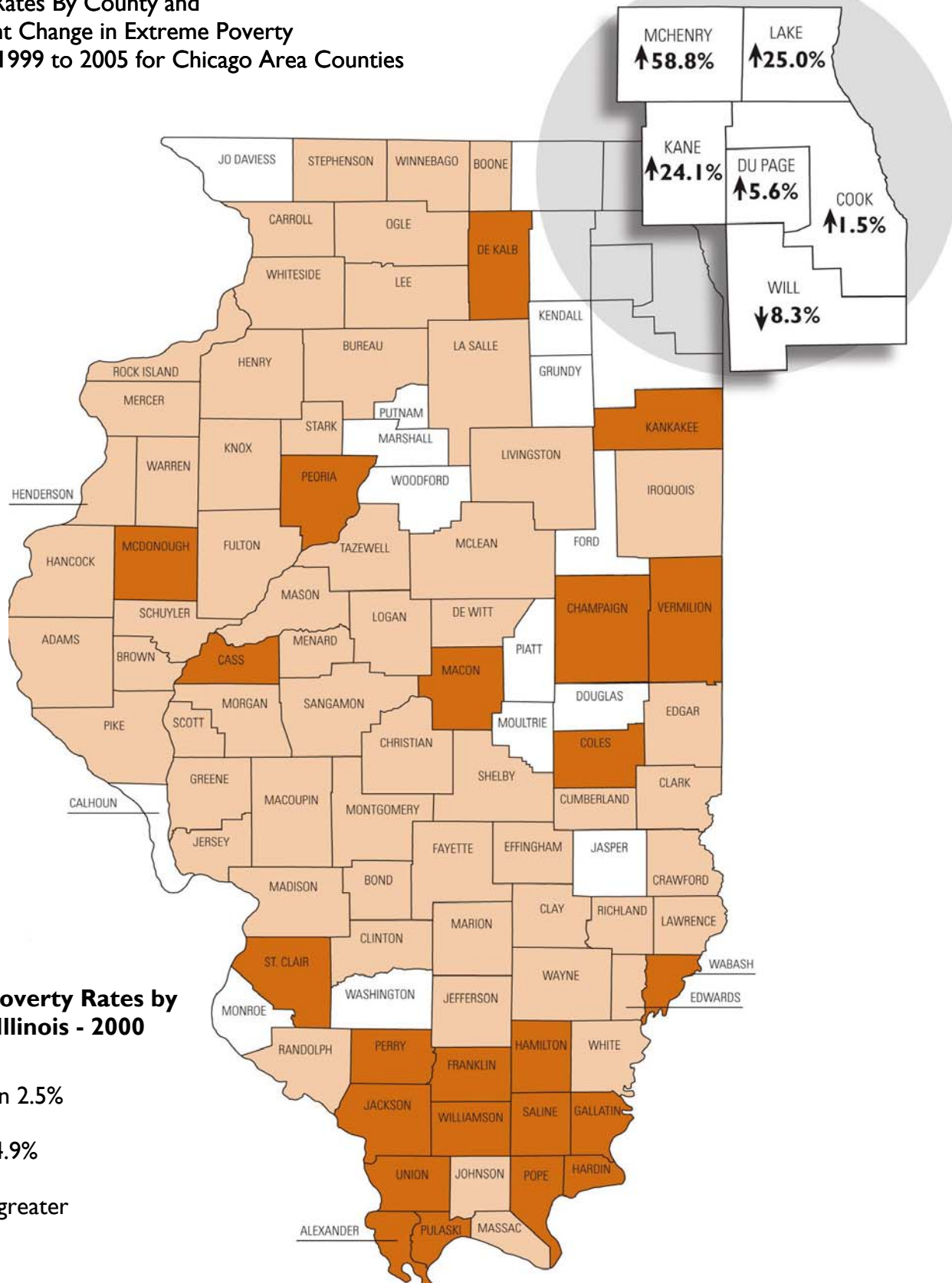
More likely to be a **minority**
 More likely to **not have a vehicle**
 Less likely to be **married**
 Less likely to **work the entire year**
 Less likely to **work even half the year**
 Less likely to **have a college degree**

...than those that are not extremely poor.

To find additional discussions on poverty and to access poverty and other related data for local Illinois communities, visit www.heartlandalliance.org/povertyreport.

Extreme Poverty Rates in Illinois⁵

1999 Rates By County and
Percent Change in Extreme Poverty
From 1999 to 2005 for Chicago Area Counties



Sustainable Work that Pays a Living Wage

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23

The Problem:

Poverty rates rise and fall with the unemployment rate.⁶ When the economy is bad and unemployment rates are up, more people fall into poverty. The Illinois unemployment rate for October 2009 was 11.0 percent, up 0.5 percent from the previous month and its highest level since August 1983.⁷ And, the number of workers in part-time jobs because they cannot find full-time work has nearly doubled nationally since mid-2006.⁸ Rising unemployment, reductions in work hours and the stagnation of family incomes, all associated with the recession, have the greatest impact on those families with the least income.⁹

Not only are more people without jobs today than anytime in recent history, our economic security has been steadily eroding. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in October 2009 in Illinois, the largest job losses were in manufacturing, durable goods, and non-durable goods.¹⁰ Job loss in these sectors reflects the shift in our economy that has left fewer good-paying, family supporting job opportunities. In 1990, 20.4 percent of Illinois workers were employed in high-paying manufacturing jobs and by 2007 only 13.2 percent were employed in manufacturing.¹¹ In contrast, lower paying jobs in leisure and hospitality, education and health and other services have grown, employing 30.7 percent of the state workforce in 2008.¹²

Nearly 20% of entries into poverty occur when the head of household loses a job.

Nearly 20 percent of entries into poverty occur when the head of household loses a job.¹³ In addition, half of poverty spells begin when the household experiences a decline in earnings.¹⁴ Yet, a growing number of low-income workers are falling into poverty despite the fact that they are engaged in the labor market. Even those lucky enough to hold a full-time, year-round job are not guaranteed to stay above the federal poverty level. In fact, 90,000 Illinoisans working full-time, year-round still fall below the poverty line.¹⁵ Without a fair living wage, these individuals will continue to struggle and suffer from poverty despite the fact that they are connected to the labor market year-round.

This picture is even bleaker for those experiencing extreme poverty. While nearly half of those living in extreme poverty are either unable or not expected to work - people living with disabilities, seniors, and children - many cannot find employment due to a variety of barriers. In Illinois, 63 percent of people released on parole are unemployed.¹⁶ Among working age adults in Illinois who are in extreme poverty:

- 22% do not have a high school diploma.
- 20% have one or more disabilities.
- 31% have children under the age of 18 at home.

Providing people who can work with jobs that match their current skill sets as well as supplementing those jobs with skills training and education will help ease more people into the workforce and allow those already working to secure better-paying jobs, both of which will increase people's incomes which is essential for reducing extreme poverty in Illinois.

Local Solutions:

- **Begin a Transitional Jobs (TJ) Program or partner with an employment program to offer TJ slots**– Transitional Jobs is an employment strategy that seeks to overcome employment barriers and transition people with labor market barriers into work using wage-paid, short term employment that combines real work, skill development and supportive services. Nonprofit, for profit, and government employers work with Transitional Jobs programs to provide job sites and supervision to the transitional employees. The following programs are just two of over a dozen Transitional Jobs Programs in operation throughout Illinois.
 - **[The Transitional Jobs – Chicago Housing Authority \(CHA\) Program](#)** is a transitional jobs program operated by Heartland Human Care Services, Harborquest, Inc., North Lawndale Employment Network, Central States SER, and Employment & Employer Services, Inc. The Program provides eligible residents of CHA developments with wage-paying, short-term employment that combines real work, skills development, and supportive services to successfully transition participants into the labor market. By working in a subsidized position ranging from 14 to 16 weeks, program participants earn a paycheck, learn technical skills for higher wage jobs, and receive intensive mentoring and support.
 - **[Clean Slate](#)** is a work crew transitional jobs program operated by The Cara Program. The Cara Program provides training, job placement and critical support services for the hard-to-employ. Clean Slate is a neighborhood beautification business cleaning sidewalks, parkways, public gardens, and vacant lots. It provides a real opportunity for individuals to learn and apply new skills, earn money, improve their long-term job prospects, and make a real difference in the community.

- [**The National Transitional Jobs Network \(NTJN\)**](#) provides technical assistance to organizations considering starting a new TJ program or to existing programs looking to improve outcomes or scale-up operations. A limited amount of technical assistance is available free of charge, with preference given to NTJN members.
- **Develop a Job Training and Placement Program**– Job training and placement programs can help to identify and address skills gaps within the workforce and meet the needs of growing and changing job sectors.
 - [**Central States SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc.’s Healthcare Bridge Program**](#), in conjunction with Daley College, provides Chicago Housing Authority residents with the opportunity to develop skills for a successful transition to the healthcare field. The program focuses on essential skill building through curriculum in writing, reading, language, and mathematics in addition to an introduction to the healthcare field and key medical terminology. Program participants receive help finding employment initially as Certified Nursing Assistants and then later as Personal Care Technicians.
 - [**Cob Connection**](#) develops and conducts after-school programs and job skills training for teens in the Chicago Public Schools and their families. Cob Connection offers training programs in urban agriculture and natural building and design. Young adults participating in the programs develop skills such as starting seeds, composting, harvesting and learn how to maintain a farm in the city.
 - [**Goodwill’s Supported Employment Program**](#) typically works with individuals with developmental disabilities and persons with severe and persistent mental illness in providing long-term job support.
 - [**The Illinois Department of Transportation’s On-the-Job Training Program**](#) is a contractual agreement between the Department and construction related contractors to provide skills training to eligible trainees. The program places women and minorities as trainees on highway construction projects throughout Illinois. Supportive services to the trainees in the form of additional training opportunities, site visits, ongoing case management, and financial assistance with necessary clothing, boots and tools for the job are also provided.
- **Start a Social Enterprise to Provide Jobs for Individuals Facing Barriers to Employment**– The employment model of social enterprise provides employment opportunities and job training to a target population, for example, people with barriers to employment such as ex-offenders, at-risk youth, people who are homeless or people with disabilities. The organization operates an enterprise employing its target population and sells its products or

services in the open market. Social support services for the employees are often built into the enterprise model and the organization achieves financial self-sufficiency through the sales of its products and services.

- **Sweet Beginnings** is an urban honey transitional jobs program for formerly incarcerated individuals operated by North Lawndale Employment Network. Individuals employed by Sweet Beginnings are trained on the job as landscapers, beekeepers, and food processors. Employees gain valuable work experience and develop the beginnings of an employment history necessary for obtaining future employment.
- **Growing Home** is a program that provides job training for homeless and low-income individuals in Chicago through a social enterprise business based on organic agriculture. The program provides experiential learning opportunities and employment in the horticulture field as well as a unique job readiness curriculum that helps reintroduce participants back into the workforce.
- **The Social Enterprise Alliance** offers access to a network of social enterprises across the country and provides information and other supports to assist in establishing a social enterprise.

Affordable Housing

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11

The Problem:

The emergence of the recession and rising unemployment rates are thrusting more and more families into poverty, thus putting them at risk for unstable housing or homelessness. As a result of the recession, approximately 34,500 additional Illinoisans may experience homelessness by the end of 2010, absent effective interventions.¹⁷ The challenges associated with the economic recession come on top of affordability problems that thousands of families already face.

Almost one out of every four renter households in Illinois spends over half their income on housing costs, putting them at high risk of becoming homeless.¹⁸ Seventy percent of all low-income children in Illinois live in a house where rent consumes a disproportionate amount of their household's income.¹⁹ Shockingly, for some families rent consumes all of their income - in Illinois a family of three living in extreme poverty has a monthly income of \$763 or less, while the average rent of a two-bedroom apartment is \$908.²⁰ As a result families are forced to double-up or triple-up to lower the cost of housing. Even then, families experiencing extreme poverty must devote too much of their budgets for housing costs leaving less money for other essentials such as food, medication, and transportation.

In Illinois a family of 3 living in extreme poverty has a monthly income of \$763 or less, while the average rent of a two-bedroom apartment is \$908.

Additionally, housing costs that are too high, coupled with declining and low incomes and earnings, have resulted in housing becoming increasingly unaffordable for many families in Illinois. Even if home prices and real rents fall further due to the recession, the improvement in affordability would do little to ease the pressures of families experiencing extreme poverty.

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An adequate supply of affordable housing is vital for preventing and ending housing instability and homelessness for extremely low-income households. However, the current supply of affordable housing in Illinois falls far short of meeting the need. For every one unit of public housing in Illinois, there are two families that need it.²¹ Demand for affordable housing dwarfs the supply and consistent shortfalls or reductions in funding for housing assistance programs have prevented programs from meeting the needs of thousands of families throughout the State who require help.

Research findings indicate that vouchers are a highly effective form of housing assistance.²² Vouchers protect children from homelessness and housing instability and substantially reduce the number of families living in poverty.²³ Because of funding limitations, only one in four households nationwide that are eligible for vouchers receive any form of federal housing assistance. In Illinois, over half of the housing authorities that offer housing choice vouchers have voucher waiting lists that are closed; many families in need of rent assistance cannot even sign up to wait for such assistance.²⁴

When an individual or family faces a housing, health care, or other financial crisis, they may be at risk of homelessness, particularly if they are unable to access affordable housing. The increasing unemployment rates coupled with the lack of access to affordable housing or housing assistance has led to an increase in homeless families. Chicago Public Schools recorded a 28 percent increase in homeless students from November 2007 to November 2008.²⁵ This trend is not confined to just Chicago; the Illinois State Board of Education reported that youth homelessness increased 67 percent in eight suburban counties from 2006 to 2008.²⁶

Homelessness does not discriminate. People from all walks of life can find themselves faced with a crisis that leads them to become homeless. Often a convergence of a number of interrelated factors leads to homelessness. For example, the inability to secure a job or permanent housing following a release from prison could lead to homelessness. For a low-wage worker with no benefits or savings, an illness of a child requiring a hospital stay could put a single-mother and her child at risk of homelessness.

That being said, certain populations are impacted by homelessness at greater rates. Youth, victims of domestic violence, people with severe mental illness, people with mental or physical disabilities, people with substance abuse disorders and the formerly incarcerated all are at greater risk of homelessness.²⁷

Local Solutions:

- [**Create a Plan to End Homelessness for Your Community**](#)– Plans to End Homelessness help communities determine and implement key system improvements, build community and political will for addressing homelessness, align resources efficiently, and begin the important march toward ending homelessness.
 - [**The DuPage County Homeless Continuum of Care**](#) was an early leader nationally and locally in the development and implementation of its 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in 2003. A third-party evaluation has documented tremendous successes after several years of work.
 - [**Chicago's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness**](#) was developed in conjunction with hundreds of stakeholders through the Chicago Continuum of Care in January of 2003. The Plan creates a blueprint for: preventing individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first

place; placing individuals and families in permanent housing as quickly as possible when they do become homeless, called “Housing First”; and providing wraparound services when appropriate to promote housing stability and self-sufficiency. The public and private sectors have begun to implement the Plan.

- [ILHousingSearch.org](#)– ILHousingSearch.org is a free bilingual website launched by the state to assist people in finding rental housing. Users can search the listings using criteria that include rent range, deposits and fees, the number of bedrooms, whether vouchers are accepted, how close the unit is to public transportation, and if pets are allowed.
- [Start a Supportive Housing Program in Your Community](#)– The Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) is a statewide association of non-profit organizations who provide supportive housing-affordable housing, enriched with supportive services-to individuals and families who are homeless and/or have special needs, such as mental illness, substance abuse issues, or other chronic illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS. SHPA’s mission is to strengthen the supportive housing industry, to enable the increased development of supportive housing, and to support non-profit organizations to develop the capacity to provide permanent supportive housing.
 - [Delta Center Inc.’s Supported Housing Program](#) provides support services for individuals to promote independence. This supportive housing program consists of 10 apartments with staff onsite to offer different levels of support to residents as needed. The apartments are available to persons with serious mental illness who require the structure offered by residential support services and who would otherwise have to reside in a more restrictive level of care than clinically necessary or who are at risk of being homeless.
- **Develop Partnerships with Private Market Landlords to Increase Access to Units for Low-Income Households.**
 - [Work with Landlords to Circumvent Credit and Background Checks and to Negotiate Security Deposits and Rent Amounts.](#) [The Planning Council’s](#) Housing Broker Team works to place high risk families with housing barriers directly into permanent housing with follow-up support services by building relationships with landlords to increase the inventory of affordable housing units. Housing Specialists make contact with private landlords and property management companies; explain the benefits of program participation including regular rent payments, a landlord contingency fund that covers any damages incurred, and wrap-around support services for clients; provide tenant education to improve a family’s understanding of their lease and rights; and act as a liaison between the tenant and landlord throughout tenancy.

- [Develop a Resource-Sharing Tool](#) to assist individuals and families experiencing poverty access housing assistance and locate available units. Direct2Housing is an online tool that fosters greater communication and collaboration among housing advocates in different agencies in order to provide the most consistent, highest-quality services to clients, and creates an environment where housing advocates share resources rather than compete for them.
- [Explore Master Lease Arrangements](#) to provide emergency housing for people in crisis as well as supportive housing to people with disabilities in a scattered site setting. SHELTER, Inc.'s Masterleasing Program places single, chronically homeless adults in permanent supportive housing directly from the streets and shelters. SHELTER, Inc. identifies privately owned apartment units, negotiates leases with landlords, and contracts with organizations to provide on-site support services.
- [The Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative](#) in DC builds relationships with landlords to allow flexibility for security deposits, payments, etc. Housing locators work with landlord and client to make each party feel comfortable. Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative has a good reputation in the community, allowing for landlords to have more trust in their clients housing situation.
- [The AIDS Foundation of Chicago \(AFC\)'s Coordinated Housing Advocacy Program](#) promotes strategies to improve the availability of safe and affordable housing for low-income people with HIV. AFC works with landlords of independent housing and their tenants to prevent homelessness through case management and emergency rental assistance.
- **Create Plans to Prevent Discharge into Homelessness**– Discharge planning protocols that prevent homelessness include ensuring that people being discharged from local hospitals, nursing homes, jails, substance abuse treatment facilities and mental health facilities are being discharged into appropriate housing. Not only is this better for people's health and well being, it is also a more efficient way to manage resources.
 - [Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio](#) has numerous sample forms to assist in discharge planning and to help service providers work with individuals to secure permanent housing.
 - [Start a Housing Action Coalition in Your County](#) – The DuPage Housing Action Coalition identifies housing needs, raises public awareness, and builds support for and advances advocacy efforts which increase access to affordable and fair housing.

- **Establish a Housing Commission in Your Community** – The Highland Park Housing Commission has served as the driving force behind many of the city’s affordable housing initiatives, including the development of its Community Land Trust, Housing Trust Fund, and Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. Having a local body dedicated to housing issues helps a community develop policies that specifically respond to area housing needs.

Access to Affordable Health Care

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health [and] the creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12

The Problem:

Poverty and health are strongly correlated.²⁸ Levels of education, income, and occupation all have an impact on the health outcomes of individuals. While it is uncertain to what degree each of these variables influence health, one thing is certain: the mere presence of poverty has an adverse affect on health outcomes.²⁹ Kids born into poverty are four times less likely to be prepared for school due to medical reasons as their better off peers.³⁰ Living in poverty increases the likelihood of obesity, diabetes, asthma, HIV, various cancers and certain disabilities.³¹ People living in poverty are three times more likely to die before the age of 65 than high-income individuals.³²

Not only does poverty have an adverse affect on health outcomes, poor health can reinforce poverty. Health problems can lead to hospital bills and missed days of work. People experiencing poverty may also forgo preventative care resulting in more costly emergency treatment when health crises arise.

Sound oral health is an important component to good overall health yet many individuals experiencing poverty have untreated oral health needs and lack preventative care. In Illinois, oral disease is pervasive among families with lower incomes.³³ These preventable oral diseases account for a great deal of tooth loss and infections that may influence the outcomes of serious health problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, pre-term low birth-weight babies and others.³⁴ Research has shown that children who are living in poverty are more likely to have teeth that are in fair or poor condition and are less able to access the care they need to maintain healthy teeth and mouths.³⁵

**Of the 667,578
Illinoisans living in
extreme poverty,
209,618 do not have
health insurance**

Poverty's effects on health are not limited to physical health. Nearly one-quarter of Illinois adolescents and one third of Chicago adolescents self-reported signs of depression for two or more weeks in a row.³⁶ Untreated mental health problems impact students' ability to learn and increase their propensity for violence, alcohol and substance abuse and other risky behaviors that are costly to treat.³⁷

The adverse effects of poverty on health outcomes are in part a result of unequal access to quality, comprehensive health care.³⁸ Having health insurance coverage is the gateway to medical care, yet of the 667,578 Illinoisans living in extreme poverty, 209,618 do not have health insurance, which severely limits their ability to obtain affordable health care services. Increasing costs, stringent eligibility requirements and over-burdened health care providers are all contributors to the high number of uninsured extremely poor. As health care premiums continue to rise at an exponential rate, the number of workers who are covered by employer-based health insurance is declining. As a result, more non-elderly are accessing Medicaid for their health insurance,³⁹ and for those who are not eligible for Medicaid, rising costs of health insurance are forcing them out of the health care insurance market altogether – and into the realm of being uninsured. These trends and the rising costs of health care have contributed to medical bills becoming the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States.⁴⁰

Even the presence of health insurance does not correlate to effective health care. Only half of Illinois children have a “medical home” or access to primary care for which they receive comprehensive care.⁴¹ In the Chicago region, an estimated 2.0 million people under age 65 are in need of health care safety net services, yet the system only has the capacity to see 1.3 million people each year.⁴²

Local Solutions:

- **Open a Community-Centered Health Clinic**—Work with local medical professionals to provide free and reduced cost health care services for children in locations frequented by families in need.
 - [**The Crest Smile Dental Clinic at the McCormick Boys and Girls Club**](#) is staffed with dental students from the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Dentistry. In partnership with the University, a vital dental clinic has been established that offers Club members access to dental care service that they would not otherwise be able to afford.
 - [**The Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers**](#) provides leadership, resources, training, and technical assistance to stabilize and expand school based and linked health centers. School Health Centers place various mental, dental, and physical health services directly within a school, making it easier for students and their families to access health care. School Health Centers primarily serve low-income children who are in poor health because they have not received routine primary health care services in the past.
 - [**The Anna-Jonesboro School Health Center**](#), sponsored by Rural Health Inc. is located within Anna-Jonesboro Community High School. The school health center provides easily accessible health care services for high school students and staff.

- **[The Seniors EyeCare Program](#)** works to ensure that every senior has access to medical eye care and promotes annual, dilated eye exams. It raises awareness about age-related eye disease, including cataracts, provides free eye care educational materials and facilitates access to eye care—at no out-of-pocket cost.
- **[Mobile Dentists and its Smile Programs](#)** was created to provide services to those children most in need and with the least chance of accessing quality preventive dental care. Rather than traveling to a dental clinic, the mobility of this program allows dentists to easily access communities where traditional services are lacking. Using mobile and portable equipment, Mobile Dentists provides high quality dental services in non-traditional settings including schools, child care facilities, service organizations and businesses.
- **[Health Care for the Homeless](#)** makes free, high-quality primary, mental and oral health care available to men, women and children who are homeless. Heartland Alliance’s medical team of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals reaches out to people in need, meeting them where they are – at shelters, single room occupancy (SRO) buildings or on the streets.
- **[Encourage Local Service Providers in Your Community to Become AllKids Application Agents](#)**– AllKids Application Agents help families apply for AllKids, FamilyCare, and Moms & Babies. AllKids Application Agents (AKAA) are community-based organizations, such as faith-based organizations, day care centers, local governments, unions, medical providers, and licensed insurance agents that assist families in completing applications for publicly funded health coverage. One of the strengths of the AllKids application process is that it opens the door for families and helps applicants receive all the public health care benefits that they are entitled to.
- **Organize Events in Your Community to Ensure that All Who Are Eligible for AllKids and FamilyCare are Enrolled in the Program.**
 - **[Kid’s First Health Fair](#)** is an annual health fair sponsored by the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science and the United Way. The event is designed to assist limited-income families residing in Lake County in meeting school health requirements for their children and to provide preventative health services. Health Fair organizers also provide information and application assistance for AllKids at this community-wide event.

Transportation

Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21

The Problem:

Transportation plays a crucial role in connecting individuals experiencing extreme poverty to job opportunities, social services, health care, and other vital resources. As suburbanization and urban sprawl continue to expand in the U.S., the physical distance between people in extreme poverty and

65% of all low-skilled jobs are located in predominately affluent suburbs, where the majority of those in extreme poverty do not live

employment opportunities that match their skill sets is widening. Sixty-five percent of all new jobs are located in suburban areas⁴³ where the majority of those in extreme poverty do not live. In metropolitan regions, public transportation systems generally provide ample access to inner suburbs from the city, but poor services to outer suburbs or between suburbs where low-skill employment opportunities are increasing.⁴⁴

The physical distance between employment opportunities and residency serves as a great impediment to achieving a pathway out of poverty. Access to affordable, reliable transportation is necessary for connecting families in extreme poverty with jobs. Yet, a disproportionate amount of low-income and minority neighborhoods have little or no access to public transportation to connect them to jobs and to essential goods and services.⁴⁵ Not only is access to public transportation limited, 78,082 households in extreme poverty do not have a car either.⁴⁶ Metropolitan areas are not the only areas where transportation can affect extreme poverty. Gaps in transportation plague areas of high rural poverty as well.⁴⁷

Many individuals and families experiencing extreme poverty rely on income supports, donations from food pantries, and other assistance offered by human service providers and state agencies. These agencies tend to be widely spread throughout rural and suburban areas. For the extremely poor who lack transportation and live in more rural areas of the state, access to these services is problematic⁴⁸, thus increasing the risks of extreme poverty.

Lack of access and increased costs associated with transportation have led to low-income workers spending as much money on transportation costs as they do on housing.⁴⁹ In Chicago, low-income working families spend on average 27 percent of their income just on transportation costs.⁵⁰

Access to affordable and reliable transportation is a key component in combating extreme poverty since it facilitates access to jobs and vital supports that keep families

experiencing poverty afloat. Though transportation solutions may differ based on population density and other factors, access to affordable transportation plays a vital role in neighborhood outcomes such as stress levels, health outcomes, job opportunities, access to social services, and economic development.

Local Solutions:

- [Hopelink Transportation Services](#) partners with the Department of Social and Health Services to provide very affordable transportation to low-income residents on Medicaid who need to get to and from medical appointments.
- [Develop a System to Coordinate Rideshares, Carpools and Existing Transportation Services](#)– Leadership In Innovative Flexible Transportation (LIFT) coordinates ride referrals, organizes transportation for events, supervises rideshare and carpool services and provides free transportation information to low-income residents of Wisconsin.
- **Begin a Car Donation Program in Your Community**– Car donation programs can help individuals and families in need of reliable transportation.
 - [Wheels of Success](#) offers dependable transportation, access to affordable automotive repairs and car-care classes to teach preventative maintenance. The program also repairs donated vehicles and distributes them to low-income individuals who make monthly payments based solely on their ability to pay. If individuals cannot pay for the vehicle with money, they can provide services for the organization in lieu of payment.
 - [Naperville CARES' Car Donation Program](#) provides donated road-worthy cars to Naperville residents in need of transportation. Access to reliable transportation helps recipients obtain and retain employment and gain self sufficiency.
 - [Provide Transportation Services for Seniors and Others in Need](#)– ITN Portland is a social enterprise which provides a community-based, economically viable and consumer-oriented, transportation service for seniors and adults with visual impairment.

Equal Access to Quality Education & Training

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26

The Problem:

Education is a strong predictor of poverty status.⁵¹ Individuals without a high school diploma are more than three times more likely to be living in extreme poverty than someone with a college degree.⁵² In Illinois, 22 percent of those experiencing extreme poverty have less than a high school education and 17 percent of young adults in extreme poverty in Illinois are not enrolled in school and are not working.⁵³ Even when employed, high school dropouts earn less money than their better educated peers.⁵⁴

Two in five women in Illinois have only a high school diploma or less, and one third of those in extreme poverty are female-headed householders and their children.⁵⁵ Since females experience poverty in disproportionate numbers compared to males, it is important to target a portion of adult education and training programs towards females with low educational attainment and low work skills. While median weekly earnings for cashiers, retail sales, and hairdressers—occupations typically occupied by females—averaged \$426, females in construction work and mechanics earned \$747 and \$779 respectively in median weekly earnings.⁵⁶

Individuals without a high school diploma are more than *three times* more likely to be living in extreme poverty than someone with a college degree

Offering women access to training opportunities in male-dominated field is important, particularly given the fact that low-income women are much more interested in non-traditional training opportunities than is commonly assumed.⁵⁷

Approximately 14 percent of Americans have no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills.⁵⁸ Research indicates that these adults do poorly in the job market and many other areas. Yet, an overwhelmingly large proportion of those living in extreme poverty only possess low skills, leaving them unprepared to meet the demands of today's labor market: between 1999 and 2006, about 70 percent of all new jobs necessitated high skills, less than 10 percent required some skills, and a little more than 20 percent required low skills.⁵⁹

Local Solutions:

- [Begin a Program at Your School to Increase Graduation Rates and Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School](#)— The National Dropout

Prevention Center/Network has identified a number of effective strategies and model programs that have been effective in decreasing the dropout rate. Many of the strategies the Network has identified have been implemented successfully at different educational levels and environments across the country.

- **Develop or Expand Upon an Adult Literacy Program**– Hundreds of thousands of adults in Illinois have less than eight years of education. An adult literacy program can use trained volunteer tutors to teach adults with less than a 9th grade education to read.
 - [Illinois Eastern Community Colleges' Literacy Development Program](#) offers adults and children the opportunity to enhance their reading skills. Individuals work with a trained volunteer tutor to learn how to better speak, read, and write. The Family Literacy Program offers parents, grandparents, and children the opportunity to learn together. This program promotes active learning through fun and educationally based literacy activities such as children's fairs, story hours, parenting classes, and individual and group tutoring.
 - [Project READ](#) is a program run out of the Decatur Public Library that provides free, volunteer-based literacy education to adults.
 - [The Literacy Directory](#), run by the National Institute of Literacy, is a online tool for finding GED/ESL/Adult Education programs in your area.
- [Develop a Bridge Training Program for Low-Skilled Adults](#)– Bridge training programs prepare adults who lack adequate basic skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training, leading to career-path employment. Bridge programs seek to enable students to advance both to better jobs and to further education and training, and thus are designed to provide a broad foundation for career-long learning on the job and formal post-high school education and training. Bridge programs are suited for adults who have reading and mathematics skills below the ninth-grade level. *Women Employed's Bridges to Careers for Low Skilled Adults: A Program Development Guide* is a useful resource for developing a bridge program in your community.
- [Begin a Vocational Training Program to Prepare Low-Skilled Workers for Jobs](#)– The Careers in Manufacturing Program (CMP) is a vocational training program that is certified by the Illinois State Board of Education (run by Jane Addams Resource Corporation in Chicago, IL). It is a 5 day/week, 14-week program that includes training on work readiness, computers, and financial education. Program participants are provided with job placement assistance after graduation, and bus passes are provided during the training program and throughout participants' time in job searching.

Adequate Food & Nutrition

The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger...

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11

The Problem:

Hunger and food insecurity are derivatives of poverty in that the presence of poverty means limited purchasing power, which has a direct effect on the household's ability to purchase food. Research shows that the lower a household's income, the greater the likelihood that members of the household will have insufficient food.⁶⁰ Adequate nutritious food is critical for healthy living, yet the ability to access and purchase healthy food is limited for people with low incomes.

Many households experiencing extreme poverty do not have enough money to cover food costs, forcing family members to skip meals, reduce portions or forgo food. The number of people in households in the United States that lacked consistent access to adequate food, called food insecurity, soared to 49 million in 2008, including 22.5 percent of all children.⁶¹ Food insecurity overall rose from 11.1 percent in 2007 to 14.6 percent in 2008.⁶² Of those individuals living in food-insecure households, 12.1 million adults and 5.2 million children lived in households with very low food security.⁶³

Nearly half of all U.S. children will be in a household that uses the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamp Program) at some point during their childhood. SNAP does more than any other single program to protect children and their families from extreme poverty; in 2005, food stamps lifted 1.7 million children younger than 18 above half the poverty line.⁶⁴ Despite increased participation rates, more than 20 percent of the men, women, and children in Illinois who are potentially eligible for SNAP do not currently participate in the program.⁶⁵

Nearly half of all US children will be in a household that uses SNAP at some point during their childhood

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is one of the largest programs that supplies low-income children with nutritious food. During the school year, the federally-funded NSLP serves over 1 million free or reduced price lunches each day to children in low-income families in Illinois. However, only one out of every four low-income children who eat lunch at school also eat breakfast there, and while virtually all public schools participate in the National School Lunch Program, only 70 percent of those schools also participate in the School Breakfast Program.⁶⁶ Illinois ranks 51st in student participation rates for the School Breakfast Program, the lowest ranking in the country.⁶⁷

Once the school year has ended, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) begins. This nutrition program option is for community sponsors who wish to combine feeding

programs with summer activity programs. Compared to the NSLP, participation in SFSP is extremely low: only about 3.3 million children access the program through summer school, camps, churches, park programs, or other location, which is less than 20 percent of participation in NSLP. The SFSP is greatly underutilized in part because there are not enough willing sponsors and feeding sites in many communities.

Many families experiencing poverty rely on food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens in addition to or in lieu of public benefit programs when food is scarce. Food pantries and food banks rely heavily on donations from food manufacturers, grocers, restaurants, caterers, and individuals. Yet, many food banks and food pantries are struggling to feed an increasing number of people seeking food assistance. Food banks across the country report about a 30 percent increase in demand on average, but some have seen as much as a 150 percent jump in demand from 2008 through the middle of 2009.⁶⁸

Studies have shown that food assistance program vendors provide less access to fresh fruits and vegetables and canned fruits and vegetables without added salt, sugar, or fat in minority and high-poverty neighborhoods than in non-Hispanic White and more affluent neighborhoods.⁶⁹ Living in a community where convenience stores or fast food restaurants are more accessible than grocery stores offering fresh fruits and vegetables puts community members at higher health risks. Living in a food desert, or an area with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, has been shown to be associated with premature death and chronic health conditions.⁷⁰ Regardless of access, the cost of more nutritious foods like fresh produce is often prohibitive for individuals and families experiencing extreme poverty.

Local Solutions:

- **[Develop a Local SNAP Outreach Plan](#)**– Increase access and participation in Food Assistance Programs for children by sustaining outreach in places frequented by parents (schools, churches, stores and food pantries). The Food Research and Action Center’s *Guide to Food Stamp Outreach Collaborations* is a useful resource for developing an outreach plan in your community.
- **[Express Stamps – A SNAP Demonstration Project](#)**–This program first launched by the Northern Illinois Food Bank and expanded by the Greater Chicago Food Depository allows families to apply for SNAP benefits in a food pantry setting. If eligible, households receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer card (Link card) that is loaded with benefits the same day, without having to go to a local human services office or go through a waiting period before receiving benefits.
- **[Help Connect Individuals and Families with Food Assistance Programs](#)**– In metropolitan Chicago, Direct2Food provides an online tool to help families locate the food pantries, soup kitchens, and meal programs nearest to them. Direct2Food also helps families determine their eligibility for further

- assistance like food stamps and resources for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- **Double the Value of Food Assistance Programs at Farmers' Markets**– The Wholesome Wave Foundation's Double Value Coupon Program doubles the value of SNAP and WIC benefits at farmers markets and other direct-to-consumer sales outlets. By doubling hunger relief benefits, families experiencing poverty are provided access to locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables in their communities.
 - **Expand USDA's National Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**– Encourage a faith-based or community organization in your area to serve as a Summer Food Service Program sponsor or as a feeding site under a sponsor.
 - **Start a Mobile Food Pantry**– Charitable distribution networks can be strengthened and enhanced by targeting distribution to areas of unmet need through the use of mobile food pantries and the development of food pantries and distributions where people naturally gather or visit (schools, senior centers, etc.). The Northern Illinois Food Bank's Mobile Food Pantry delivers food directly to hungry people in need of food. The Mobile Food Pantry is able to serve locations of concentrated need where residents may lack transportation to food assistance agencies or where agencies do not exist.
 - **Increase the Number of Schools Offering Breakfast and the Number of Children Enrolled in the Program**– School administrators should make sure that every school offers breakfast to students who qualify for the School Breakfast Program. School districts can also do frequent outreach throughout the school year to encourage families to apply for free and reduced-price meals and maximize participation in the program.

Availability of Adequate Income Supports

The Problem:

Half of Illinoisans living in extreme poverty are not expected to be working or may not be able to work, meaning that income from wages is not a reliable source of livelihood.⁷¹ For those who can work, many jobs do not pay wages that ensure a family is not living in poverty. Fewer than 12,000 working age adults worked full time year round and 71,080 worked at least half the year yet still experienced extreme poverty.⁷² An effective safety net comprised of emergency cash assistance and income supports such as food stamps, child care assistance, or a housing subsidy, plays a vital role in helping those who cannot work meet their basic needs and in bridging the gap between a layoff and the next job opportunity or between low wages and what it takes to actually make ends meet. However, a myriad of challenges plague the income supports system in the nation and in Illinois:

- Supports are designed to help struggling families, but often fail to make it into the hands of many who are eligible due to a lack of information about existing programs and barriers within the application system.
- Many of the systems in place to connect eligible people with income supports rely on outdated policies and procedures causing a lot of red tape for people in need of assistance.
- Benefit amounts do not reflect actual need and are often too low to make a meaningful difference for families struggling to make ends meet.
- As families are successful in securing employment and increasing wages they fall into a policy gap where their incomes are too high to qualify for supports, but not high enough to get by.

The effectiveness of our income support system has been weakening over the past decade. In 1995, the AFDC (which preceded TANF) lifted 62 percent of children above 50 percent of the federal poverty line but by 2005 this declined to just 21 percent for the TANF program.⁷³ The number of people receiving TANF in Illinois has declined precipitously. In June 2000, 262,295 people received TANF while in June 2009 the number had dropped to 67,530.⁷⁴

HALF of Illinoisans living in extreme poverty are not expected to be working or may not be able to work

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal and state tax credit for low- and moderate-income working people designed to encourage and reward work as well as offset payroll and income taxes. In 2009, the federal EITC lifted an estimated 6.6 million people out of poverty, including 3.3 million children.⁷⁵ The EITC lifts more children out of poverty than any other single program or category of programs. Yet, one of five Illinois families who are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) fail to take advantage of this tax relief which they are entitled to.⁷⁶

Local Solutions:

- **Help People Access the Benefits for Which They are Eligible**– Partner with a local legal assistance organization to advise individuals on the public benefits that may be available. The Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago helps people apply for and maintain public benefits, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Medicare Part D prescription drug benefits, AABD (Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled cash assistance program), survivors’ benefits, and Food Stamps, through a telephone advocacy system.

- **Provide Free Tax Preparation Services for Low-Income Families**
 - **Partner with the Center for Economic Progress in holding a One Day Tax Clinic** in your community to ensure low-income families are taking advantage of the EITC.
 - **Volunteer to Be a Tax Preparer** for an organization that offers free tax preparation for workers experiencing poverty.
 - **Partner with a University Student Group to Offer Free Tax Preparation Services**– This can be done by contacting the Accounting Student Association in your local University or College and hosting them in your organization’s space (e.g. church) to provide free tax preparation services to low-income families in your community. The students benefit from gaining experience in preparing taxes and the families are assured the benefits of the EITC as well as free tax preparation.

- **Utilize Online Information to Assist Families in Accessing Low-Income Benefits Programs**– This is a handy tool that an organization can utilize to help low-income families in the community better access and take advantage of benefits programs available to them in their respective states.
 - **The Illinois Self-Sufficiency Standard Project** provides resources and information on how income supports can help families meet their basic needs and allows users to explore what it takes for families throughout Illinois communities to make ends meet.

- **Start or join a Giving Circle at your Church or Community Group**– Giving Circles are any group of individuals who associate and pool their funds and/or in-kind contributions (time, goods, or property) to improve the public good.
 - **Dining for Women** is a dinner giving circle. The women involved "dine in" together once a month, each bringing a dish to share, and the amount of money each individual would have spent “dining out” is collected and sent to programs empowering women. The group supports women living

in extreme poverty by funding programs fostering good health, education, and economic self-sufficiency.

Quality Affordable Child Care

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Convention on the Rights of a Child, Article 18

The Problem:

The importance of quality affordable child care as part of an anti-poverty initiative is two-fold. First, affordable and available child care is crucial for allowing parents to engage in the workforce or schooling/training to better their job prospects. When families cannot find child care or cannot find child care they can afford, parents' ability to hold income-generating work is severely limited, which makes poverty much more likely for that family. Second, the research evidence that links early childhood experiences to later life outcomes continues to grow. The ages of 0 to 5 are critical to young children's development, including their social and emotional skills.⁷⁷ Research has shown that the quality of the relationship between children and those who care for them influences every aspect of young children's development, including intelligence, language, emotions, and social competence.⁷⁸ These developmental aspects have significant bearing on income potential and the probability of experiencing poverty later in life.⁷⁹

Receipt of child care assistance as an income support for families experiencing extreme poverty increases the likelihood that single-parents will be able to secure and maintain stable employment. Of the 71,080 working age adults in extreme poverty that worked at least 26 weeks in the past year, 20,943 of them are heads of household with children and an additional 10,851 are not heads of household, but also live with kids.⁸⁰ In Illinois, 13.2 percent (88,080) of individuals living in extreme poverty are single-parents and one third of those in extreme poverty are single female-headed households and their children.⁸¹ Among single-parent TANF case heads in Illinois, one third have had child care problems that have interfered with their ability to participate in work or training.⁸²

For single-parent headed households experiencing extreme poverty, lack of access to affordable child care can be a significant barrier to securing and maintaining employment.

Child care assistance can play an important role in providing income support for families experiencing poverty who are struggling to gain self-sufficiency and become or remain independent of the welfare system, but with annual fees for full-time center care

averaging \$11,025 for an infant and \$8,117 for a 4-year old in Illinois, the cost of child care is completely out of reach without assistance for a family experiencing extreme poverty.⁸³ Despite recent increases, Illinois' provider reimbursement rates are still below the market rate for quality child care. As a result, child care providers routinely require families receiving assistance through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to pay the difference between the state rate and the private rate in addition to their CCAP co-payment, which can be a substantial barrier for low-income families.

One in five employees in the United States works mostly at nonstandard times-during the evening, at night, or on rotating shifts-and one in three works on the weekend.⁸⁴ In spite of this reality, only a small number (12 to 35 percent) of child care providers offer nonstandard hour care.⁸⁵ In Illinois, the Child Care Assistance Program's policy of requiring a parent's work hours to closely match the hours their child is in care prevents low-income workers with non-traditional work schedules, including those with early morning, evening, overnight or rotating time shifts, and teen parents in high school, from accessing high quality, stable child care.

While high fees and co-pays and hours that do not fit reality for many workers limit child care accessibility for many families in poverty, there are other access issues related to the program's capacity to meet the need. As many as 138,047 children in Cook County eligible for Illinois Child Care Assistance are not using it.⁸⁶ Even though it cannot be assumed that all of those children have an unmet need for child care, research has shown that 40 percent of those seeking child care in Cook County have encountered one or more problems.⁸⁷ Of families reporting one or more barriers to accessing child care, the top issues they encountered were no openings, problems with the location of care, cost and schedule problems.⁸⁸

Local Solutions:

- **Start a Community-Centered Child Care Program**– Work with local early childhood experts to expand parents' access to affordable and easily accessible child care options.
 - [Illinois Action for Children's Community Connections](#) is a promising local program model for connecting low-income at-risk children in home-based child care with state funded, classroom-based preschool programs. Home-based child care is often more accessible for families experiencing poverty for a variety of reasons, including affordability, convenient locations, and flexible hours to accommodate work schedules.
 - [Assist Families in Navigating the Child Care Assistance Program](#)– The procedures and paperwork required by the Child Care Assistance Program can be confusing. By identifying and training individuals and organizations to help families navigate the child care subsidy system, communities may help to ensure that families receive assistance.

- **Link Child Care With Services that Support Vulnerable Families to Provide a Comprehensive Continuum of Care**– The Women’s Treatment Center in Chicago recognizes that women are often denied residential drug abuse treatment services, because facilities lack child care services. At The Women’s Treatment Center mothers are provided comprehensive treatment services and a safe place to detox without separation from their children because the organization offers onsite child care.
- **Organize a Child Care Cooperative**– A child care cooperative is an informal organization made up of a number of families in a community who share child care. Parent’s take turns watching each other’s children and no money is exchanged.
 - **Knight’s Landing Children’s Center** is a more formalized example of the child care cooperative model. This Center is conveniently located in a local elementary school classroom and meets the unique child care needs of parents at or below the poverty line in a rural agricultural community.

Conclusion

Freedom from poverty is a human right. As we work in our communities to implement strategies that allow people who are experiencing extreme poverty to gain access to decent, affordable housing and to adequate food and nutrition we will be helping people access their human right to an adequate standard of living and advancing human rights.

Action at all levels is necessary to help move us closer to the goal of eliminating poverty. Local strategies must be combined with state and federal policy work and progress must be progressively realized. Poverty elimination will not happen over night or even over the course of the year or couple of years, but movement towards full realization of human rights is necessary.

Implementing quality services and programs across all areas is key to achieving the desired outcome of poverty elimination. In replicating strategies outlined in this report it is important to engage and consult with experts in various fields and to secure adequate investments to achieve quality and to adequately meet the needs of individuals and families experiencing poverty.

Continued local dialogue and the engagement of diverse stakeholders working together can achieve change. Starting today we can all do our part to bring our communities, our counties, and our state one step closer to the goal of poverty elimination through collective advocacy and through the implementation of local solutions. We welcome the commitment and participation of all who want to join us in this extraordinarily important effort.

The From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign

The *From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign: Realizing Human Rights in Illinois* was established to create a comprehensive vision and a workable plan grounded in human rights standards that will halve extreme poverty in Illinois by the year 2015. The campaign contextualizes poverty within the human rights framework, facilitates conversations across parties and interests in order to build shared understanding and urgency, uses our collective knowledge to identify solutions, and leverages our collective commitment to human rights to press for real change.

The campaign is guided by the following beliefs:

- 1) Freedom from poverty is a human right.
- 2) Education on human rights and access to opportunity is a necessary component to removing existing barriers.
- 3) All human rights – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural – are indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent.
- 4) Inequality and discrimination play a central role in the existence of poverty.
- 5) Those living in poverty must be engaged in the development, adoption, and enforcement of policies that grant freedom from poverty.
- 6) Poverty eradication will be progressively realized and is subject to the availability of resources.
- 7) Poverty eradication requires specific, measurable plans and policies.

Working from these core principles, the campaign educates individuals and communities throughout the state on how to end poverty through realizing human rights. Since the campaign's launch on Human Rights Day in December 2006, over 1,300 individuals and 270 organizations and faith communities covering every legislative district in Illinois have endorsed the campaign and declared they believe freedom from poverty is a human right. This growing movement will work with the members of the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty to implement the steps necessary to realize the preamble to the Illinois Constitution, which states that a fundamental goal of Illinois is to eliminate poverty.

As we move forward, the campaign is continuing to engage individuals and organizations, especially those living in poverty, from throughout the state in this process by providing human rights education and meaningful avenues for supporting this important work. In addition, the campaign continues to involve elected and appointed officials toward the establishment of a poverty eradication strategy that will have substantive, measurable goals to move the state toward eradicating extreme poverty and dramatically reducing overall poverty.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Abridged)¹

Article 1 – Right to Equality

Article 2 – Freedom from Discrimination

Article 3 – Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security

Article 4 – Freedom from Slavery

Article 5 – Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment

Article 6 – Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law

Article 7 – Right to Equality before the Law

Article 8 – Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal

Article 9 – Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile

Article 10 – Right to Fair Public Hearing

Article 11 – Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty

Article 12 – Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, and Correspondence

Article 13 – Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country

Article 14 – Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution

Article 15 – Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It

Article 16 – Right to Marriage and Family

Article 17 – Right to Own Property

Article 18 – Freedom of Belief and Religion

Article 19 – Freedom of Opinion and Information

Article 20 – Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Article 21 – Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections

Article 22 – Right to Social Security

Article 23 – Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions

Article 24 – Right to Rest and Leisure

Article 25 – Right to Adequate Living Standard

Article 26 – Right to Education

Article 27 – Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community

Article 28 – Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document

Article 29 – Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development

Article 30 – Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights

¹ University of Minnesota. (n.d.). *Human rights resource center*. Retrieved November 15, 2006, from <http://www.hrusa.org/default.htm>

What You Can Do to Help End Poverty in Illinois

Endorse the Campaign

Add your name, the name of your faith community, your city, your county, your township, or other groups you may belong to continue to build the human rights movement in Illinois. Simply go online to:

www.heartlandalliance.org/poverty/join

Once there, you can indicate other ways you want to be involved in the campaign work toward ending poverty in Illinois. More importantly, spread the word so others can join the campaign.

Make Your Voice Heard

Let your legislators know that you want them to make ending poverty a top priority. When you endorse, be sure to sign up to receive action alerts that allow you to quickly communicate to elected officials about important issues that impact poverty.

Educate Yourself on the Issues Impacting Poverty and Human Rights

Sign up to receive e-mail updates from the campaign when you endorse and visit the campaign's blog – povertytoopportunity.blogspot.com – where you will find news and information on poverty and human rights.

Implement Local Solutions in Your Community

This report was designed to provide individuals and organizations with tangible, effective solutions for decreasing extreme poverty. Identify one of the local solutions identified in this report and figure out how to make it work in your community.

Glossary

AFDC: Aid to Families with Dependent Children was a federal assistance program in effect from 1935 to 1996, which provided cash welfare to poor families with children.

Durable good: A durable good is a good that you can use more than just once. Examples of durable goods include refrigerators, cars, home furnishings, sporting goods, electronics, games and toys. Durable goods are typically characterized by a long period of time between two successive purchases.

EITC: The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a tax credit for low- and moderate-income working people. It is designed to encourage and reward work as well as offset payroll and income taxes. The EITC is “refundable,” which means that if it exceeds a low-wage worker’s income tax liability the IRS will refund the balance.

GED: General Educational Development (GED) is a group of five subject tests which, when passed, certify that the taker has high school-level academic skills. The GED is sometimes referred to as a General Equivalency Diploma or General Education Diploma.

Non-durable goods: Goods that are used once, or sometimes they are defined as having a life span of less than 3 years. Examples of nondurable goods include FMCGs (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) such as cosmetics and cleaning products, food, fuel, office supplies, packaging and containers, paper and paper products, personal products, rubber, plastics, textiles, clothing and footwear.

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, as part of a federal effort to “end welfare as we know it.” TANF replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. The program provides time-limited financial assistance for pregnant women and families with one or more dependent children.

TIF: Tax Increment Financing is a public financing tool for community redevelopment and neighborhood improvements. TIF utilizes future gains in property taxes to finance current development projects.

USDA: The United States Department of Agriculture.

WIC: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children - better known as the WIC Program - serves to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, & children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.

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- ¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2009). *The 2009 HHS poverty guidelines*. Retrieved March 27, 2009, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2005, special calculation conducted by the Social IMPACT Research Center.
- ³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2005, special calculation conducted by the Social IMPACT Research Center.
- ⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2005, special calculation conducted by the Social IMPACT Research Center.
- ⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2005, special calculation conducted by the Social IMPACT Research Center.
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