

Anti-Poverty Strategy

BACKGROUND

The Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners approved the Poverty Elimination Framework in November 2003. The Framework provides a foundation for planning and policy development for the County's anti-poverty programs and services. The Framework was developed through an 18-month planning process that incorporated research, service data, and extensive community involvement in the development of the plan. The Framework initiatives emphasize ending poverty over "easing poverty" programs.

In addition to the Poverty Elimination Framework, Multnomah County CCFC created its "Six-Year Community Plan for Improving Outcomes for Children & Families in Multnomah County" in January 2008. The Community Plan is a legislative mandate for counties who are part of the State of Oregon's Commission on Children & Families system. The CCFC used a "meta-analysis" approach to researching and developing specific community needs data from 2003 – 08 that included reports, research, and community planning efforts related to issues relating to children and families as well as low-income populations.

A Steering Committee comprised of community leaders and stakeholders was formed to assist in the development of the Community Plan's policy and planning recommendations. Four key issues were identified for the plan's focus: Poverty, Health Care, Affordable Housing, and Parent Resources. The Community Plan's content and policy recommendations mirror those of the Poverty Elimination Framework and also added new anti-poverty work in the area of linking working families to free tax assistance and tax credit programs.

MISSION

We are committed to creating a community of support that enables all people to be successful within our economic, political, educational, social, and cultural systems. Multnomah County's aim is to move individuals, families, and communities out of poverty. We are all responsible for long-term change for economic justice.

Goal One

All people work together to end poverty

OUTCOMES

- Accurate information about “true” poverty is used for public decision making, policy setting, and community education
- All stakeholders have ownership and accountability for ending poverty
- Voices of low-income people are heard

STRATEGIES

1. Engage the participation of low-income people, advocates, agency staff and government officials in anti-poverty planning and policy Development. Multnomah County’s Commission on Children, Families & Community (CCFC) and its Poverty Action Council (PAC) include representation from all community sectors, including individuals living on a low-income.
2. CCFC and PAC conduct community engagement around the issue of poverty through their on-going community education work that includes the “Ask the Expert” listening sessions.

Goal Two

All people have access to effective systems of support and resources to meet their basic needs

OUTCOMES

- Individuals and families have access to comprehensive culturally competent services in the following areas:
 - Economic sufficiency
 - Affordable, stable, and decent housing
 - Food security
 - Adequate health care and needed social services
 - Affordable, reliable transportation
 - Quality child care that is accessible and affordable
 - A safe home and community
 - Service delivery systems are effective
- Accessible and accurate information and referral to resources, supports, and services is available

STRATEGIES

1. Provide direct community services to low-income consumers through the County's SUN Anti-Poverty Service System network of anti-poverty providers.
2. The County Department of Human Services implements innovative programs and partners with Worksystems, Inc. to prevent or address the issue of homelessness in different populations, including youth, singles, and families.
3. Provide services to the community through the Family Economic Security Project, which includes free tax preparation, financial education and application assistance for the SNAP and Oregon Healthy Kids programs.
4. CCFC's Early Childhood Council conducts policy development and planning in support of quality child care programming.

Goal Three

All people have the ability to build economic and personal assets to achieve self-sufficiency

OUTCOMES

- Achievement gap for students living on a low-income is eliminated
- Higher proportion of low-income people become part of a skilled workforce and have the capacity to earn a "living wage"
- Individual initiative to increase income is supported, barriers are reduced, and incentives for success are in place
- Economic development strategies create "living wage" job opportunities for low-income people

STRATEGIES

1. Action for Prosperity will provide 300 households at or below 125% of Federal Poverty Level with a coordinated package of rent assistance, assertive engagement, workforce training, and flexible client assistance. At least 150 of the households will become employed and 75% will have stable housing at exit.
2. Provide direct community services to students through the County's SUN School-Based Service System.
3. The County Department of Human Services implements innovative programs and partners with Worksystems, Inc. to provide employment-related services for low-income families.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Poverty elimination efforts should be:

- Consumer driven and honor the experience and expertise of those living in poverty by including them in all aspects of planning, program development and service delivery.
- Equally focused on policy and service solutions in recognition that community poverty is a result of both economic inequities and personal achievement.
- Supportive of economic self-determination of people and communities by promoting just economic policies and individual responsibility.
- Accountable and results-based requiring all stakeholders to be responsible for the documentation, dissemination and utilization of process and outcome data in their decision-making.
- Based on relationships of equality and respect that eliminate or minimize the impact of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or religion.
- Collaborative and sustainable by encouraging inter-governmental and community-based partnerships in the implementation of the “Poverty Elimination Framework.”
- Flexible and innovative relying upon open dialogue, research and best practices to be effective.
- Integrated into broader community-building efforts in order to engage all community members and to reduce the stigmatization of being labeled “poor”.

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY DEFINITIONS

Poverty is defined as having insufficient income and resources to meeting basic needs. It should be measured using an economic sufficiency standard based on the actual cost of living in Multnomah County.

Living Wage is defined as the wage that allows families to meeting basic needs without resorting to public assistance and provides them some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead. It is not a poverty wage. Living wages are calculated on basis of family budget for several household types and include basic necessities such as food, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, child care, and so forth. A living wage is sufficient to allow a family to accumulate personal savings and pay all tax indebtedness.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Multnomah County will take a lead role in creating the collaborations needed to implement the Anti-Poverty Strategy, State government, local governments, non-profit providers, advocates, and the business community will all be recruited as key partners in implementation planning.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

5-Year Goals

To sustain anti-poverty work, the Poverty Action Council involves all stakeholders, including low-income consumers and traditionally under-represented populations. State government, local governments, non-profit providers, advocates, and the business community will all be recruited to be key partners in implementation planning.

Enable low-income, working families to develop greater economic assets by creating access to free tax assistance and tax credit utilization

1-Year Goal

PAC will engage diverse stakeholders, including low- and moderate-income people as well as advocates, in implementation planning and policy recommendations.

- Low- and moderate income people comprise 2/3 (5 – 7 members) of Poverty Action Council membership and are actively involved in planning and policy decisions. The CCFC has 1/3 of its membership living on a low-income.
- Progress will be tracked by the Community Action Coordinator, Commission on Children, Families and Community of Multnomah County.
- Conduct outreach to consumers about available tax credit programs and provide them with free tax assistance through the Family Economic Security Program.