

# Poverty and Children's Health

## What is poverty?

Families in the U.S. are considered living in poverty if they have an income below 100% of the federal poverty level [FPL]. In 2017, a family of four with an income of \$24,600 or less would be considered poor. The FPL number is what allows families to qualify for many services and programs to assist them in getting their basic needs met.

The formula used to figure out the FPL was developed in 1963 and used emergency food costs to determine how much a family would need to live at a bare minimum. While there have been adjustments to the way that we calculate the FPL number, this basic formula is still being used to decide who is "poor." Most scholars agree that the poverty line is set far too low and that it also does not account for expenses like childcare, commuting and utilities that have grown since the 1960's.

## Is poverty really a problem?

Even with our poverty line set so low, the U. S. has one of the highest poverty rates of any industrialized country in the world. In Illinois, over 1/3 of people are considered low income or living in poverty.

Children are impacted more than any other group by poverty. According to 2014 Census data:

- About 21.1% of all US children younger than 18 years lived in households designated as "poor."
- Nearly 9.3% lived in households of deep poverty (incomes below 50% of the FPL).
- 16 million children lived in families who received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
- Between 2007 and 2010, foreclosures affected 5.3 million children.

## How does poverty impact kids?

Poverty affects children's bodies and health. Poverty means that kids may not know where their next meal is coming from, have safe and stable housing, feel safe on their block, or have fully funded schools. Poverty is associated with higher rates of stress and many health issues, like asthma, obesity, low birth-weight, high blood pressure, and accidental injuries.

Poverty in the United States is an issue that we care about as people of faith. Our religious bodies and congregations have programs, services and missions that help to relieve poverty in our neighborhoods and advocate for healthy and just economic and social conditions. Our moral imperative to end poverty is more important than ever.

**Prayer:** *May we be instruments of justice for our children so that they have what they need to thrive.*

9/2017



# National Observance of Children's Sabbaths

Today in our rich nation, one out of every five children lives in poverty. Most are in working families. Most are White and most are poor children living outside central cities. The younger you are, the more likely you are to live in poverty.

Unite with thousands of places of worship across the country on October 20-22, 2017 to end childhood poverty by participating in the 26th Annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® Celebration, "Moving Forward with Hope: Love and Justice for Every Child."

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, sponsored by the [Children's Defense Fund](#), joins faith communities:

- In celebration of children as beloved by the Eternal and entrusted to our care;
- To raise awareness of the problems facing children and families in our nation and the texts and teachings in each of our religious traditions that call us to nurture and protect children with love and justice;
- To join in immediate and long-term action to nurture, protect, and seek justice for children.

Visit [childrensdefense.org](#) for a toolkit, templates, bulletin inserts and many other resources for your Children's Sabbath activities.

## SAVE THE DATE

Social Determinants of Child Health: Focus on Poverty

Advocate Children's Hospital

November 15th, 2017

8:00am- 4:30 pm

University of Illinois at Chicago

Illinois Room- Student Center East

750 S. Halsted, Chicago IL

Featuring Dr. Marcella Wilson, author of *Diagnosis: Poverty*, and a faith-based initiative in Detroit that is applying the principles of Dr. Wilson's *Transition to Success* program in their community.

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