

FactSheet

Childhood Poverty

Living in poverty, even for a short period of time, is likely to mean that a child will suffer life-long consequences. Childhood poverty increases the risk of having poor health, dropping out of school, becoming a teen parent, and living in poverty as an adult.

The unusually harsh and volatile economic climate has made the issue of economic security more prominent and the task of safeguarding our children's well-being that much more urgent. Past experience tells us families, and children in particular, are affected for many years when their economic circumstances are reduced during a recession.

In order to develop a more effective system to combat poverty, many states have already moved to set poverty-reduction goals and establish commissions to help them understand the causes and impacts of poverty specific to their state. New York State has yet to adopt either. Investing in programs and policies that keep children and families above poverty during a fiscal crisis is difficult, but bold steps now will pay dividends in future productivity and vitality.



Key Facts

- ▶ One in five New York State children now live in poverty; more than half of those children live in extreme poverty (below 50% of the federal poverty level).
- ▶ Children in our state's major cities suffer disproportionately. More than 40% of the children in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica live in poverty, as do more than 35% of those living in Albany, Poughkeepsie, and the Bronx.
- ▶ Persons of color are twice as likely to live in poverty. In New York State, more than one in four Hispanics/Latinos, over one in five African-Americans, and one in ten whites live in poverty.
- ▶ New York cannot wait to address poverty. In addition to the lifelong individual consequences, the long-term statewide impact of childhood poverty includes less productivity and economic output and higher expenditures for health care, child welfare and crime.

We Can Do Better

- ▶ Set a goal of cutting the childhood poverty rate in half by 2020 and put in place the necessary structures and strategies that will measure progress toward that goal.
- ▶ Invest in strategies that are proven to help families such as living wage jobs, higher minimum wage, job training for low-income adults, and education at all levels.
- ▶ Ensure access to programs that can help make work pay, such as food stamps, child care, health insurance, and affordable housing.