



CHILDREN AND POVERTY FAST FACTS

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Sadly, too many children under the age of 18 in California are living in poverty. The elderly used to have the highest poverty rate in the country but over the years more resources have been devoted to alleviating poverty in that age group. This fact sheet will provide some of the issues as well as some of the opportunities to improve upon the status of children.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Who are the children in poverty? In 2010 the federal poverty level was \$22,050 for a family of four. 2010 Census figures show that about 21% of all children living in the United States meet the federal definition of living in poverty. The 2010 census also shows that 14.20% of persons living in California reported income below the poverty level. The following is data for Central California Area Social Services Consortium (CCASSC) counties from the new 2010 census:

	Population who report income below poverty level	Number of own children living in home under 18 years of age
Calaveras County	11.30%	7,601
Fresno County	21.50%	234,344
Kings County	22.20%	214,404
Kern County	19.50%	36,392
Madera County	20.60%	34,948
Mariposa County	13.50%	2,876
Merced County	24.60%	68,445
San Joaquin County	15.70%	168,778
San Luis Obispo County	13.20%	44,817
Santa Barbara County	15%	81,536
Stanislaus County	17%	124,503
Tulare County	23%	121,214

A March 2011 publication by the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) stated that there are 524,535 children aged 0-4 living in poverty in California.

Race and ethnicity is closely associated with poverty. There is a greater likelihood for a minority child to be in poverty as well as a child who has an immigrant parent.

FINANCIAL

Poverty has significant negative effects on children and it can be said that their poverty strains the economic outlook for the United States. The government does assist children in poverty through such means as Medicaid, financial assistance, food assistance, Women's Infant and Children's Program (WIC), Head Start, school lunch, the child tax credit, and the Earned Income tax credit. Some states (not California) go even further and have a refundable state earned income tax credit.

According to the 2009 Community Health Interview Survey, adult women residing in California with an annual household income of less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and who had a child under age 7 or who were pregnant were asked if they were receiving WIC. Statewide there were 46.4% responding that they did obtain WIC whereas in the CCASSC region 50.5% responded in the affirmative. According to the Journal of Children and Poverty, increases in poverty rates can be associated with increases in Unemployment rates. The truth is that over the last several decades the federal budget for children's programs has not kept pace with that spent on the elderly.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Single parenthood is one of the main factors that contribute to poverty among children. In fact 50% of single mothers and their children live below the poverty line. According to the 2010 census the following is the percentage of single parent households in CCASSC counties: Calaveras 29.3%, Fresno 35.2%, Kern 33.9%, Kings 33.1%, Madera 30.5%, Mariposa 29.3%, Merced 32.4%, San Joaquin 31.8%, San Luis Obispo 28.5%, Santa Barbara 27.2%, Stanislaus 31%, and Tulare 33.4%. In the United States paternity is not always established for these children and so many children remain in poverty when perhaps the mothers could be collecting child support. Even when paternity is established the money is never collected and so the children do not get the necessary benefit from this source of income. While single parenthood is a risk factor for poverty, we must remember that there are many two parent households living in poverty.

EDUCATION

Children living in poverty struggle to achieve the same success in school as those who are financially secure. Studies have shown that infants in poverty are not read to as often as those infants from higher income families. Further, by the start of school, those children living in poverty are more likely to have a smaller vocabulary than those from higher income households. Thus, these children tend to struggle in school and fall behind their peers.

In addition, data shows that when parents do not have a high school diploma, the likelihood for the family and their children to live in poverty is increased.

California's budget woes have impacted our schools. In 2008 the California legislature allowed school districts to reduce classroom days. At this time some of the CCASSC counties have kept the 180 school days. The shorter academic year, as well as the reduction of summer classes exacerbates the educational opportunities for many low-income students who cannot afford many of the activities enjoyed by children from higher income families, such as museum visits, art gallery visits, music lessons, and private tutoring.

HEALTH

Children in poverty tend to have more health issues than children from more affluent families. Many children are without private medical insurance so rely on government supported medical coverage. Due to recent policy changes, there has been a reduction in the benefits provided to those children reliant upon government medical coverage. There is an increased likelihood that mothers who are living in poverty will give birth to a low birth weight baby. Children with poor health may miss more days of school. Health is adversely affected by poor nutrition and those in poverty may suffer from food insecurity.