

Twelve Ways to Improve Learning

Support Families in Providing for Basic Needs

Definition and Source

Child poverty – The poverty threshold is determined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and varies by family size; for example, a family of four was considered to be living in poverty if they earned less than \$18,810. Child poverty data are from the 2000 Census Summary File 3 and the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates intercensal estimates (www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe.html).

Unemployment rate – This calculates the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the total labor force during the week of Oct. 12, 2004. We use non-seasonally adjusted rates. Data are from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (<http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/laus/ratecounty.htm>).

Children receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – TANF is Illinois' program that provides financial assistance to poor families. Data are from September of each year and refers to all children in any type of TANF case. Chicago figures are based on estimates using geocoding from the Cook County figures. Data are from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Trends and Key Findings

Children who grow up poor are more likely to experience a range of troubling outcomes, including developmental delays and learning disabilities. As these children grow older, they are more likely to drop out of school, have babies in their teens and be unemployed. The child poverty rate in Illinois is fairly steady at around 15 percent. The highest concentrations – where more than one of every five children lives in poverty – are largely in the rural southern tip of Illinois.

Families need well-paying jobs, affordable housing and financial support in times of emergency to help them achieve economic security and provide for their family. Many Illinoisans continue to struggle to find jobs despite a statewide

FAMILY SUPPORTS

	CHILDREN IN POVERTY (%)			UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2004 (%)	CHILDREN RECEIVING TANF			
	2000	2002	% CHANGE		1996	2003	2004	% CHANGE, 1996-2004
Illinois	14.3	15.3	7.0	5.6	456,802	77,651	81,067	-82.3
Adams	12.3	14.8	20.3	2.8	1,640	263	210	-87.2
Alexander	39.1	32.9	-15.9	8.0	1,127	367	457	-59.4
Bond	11.3	12.3	8.8	4.5	311	42	51	-83.6
Boone	9.1	9.0	-1.1	5.9	381	27	45	-88.2
Brown	10.0	11.2	12.0	4.4	51	0	1	-98.0
Bureau	10.4	10.9	4.8	5.1	455	76	95	-79.1
Calhoun	9.5	9.6	1.1	4.0	76	6	6	-92.1
Carrroll	13.7	13.7	0.0	5.7	232	43	57	-75.4
Cass	15.5	13.9	-10.3	4.0	207	45	56	-72.9
Champaign	12.2	14.2	16.4	3.2	3,787	558	434	-88.5
Christian	13.8	13.8	0.0	4.9	782	78	71	-90.9
Clark	12.7	15.3	20.5	5.0	321	52	36	-88.8
Clay	13.1	15.3	16.8	5.6	263	49	51	-80.6
Clinton	8.2	7.9	-3.7	4.4	459	88	132	-71.2
Coles	11.9	14.6	22.7	3.9	852	63	71	-91.7
Cook	19.3	20.7	7.3	6.2	305,515	53,635	53,523	-82.5
Crawford	15.4	15.1	-1.9	4.7	401	40	39	-90.3
Cumberland	13.6	13.1	-3.7	5.5	233	26	23	-90.1
De Kalb	7.4	8.8	18.9	4.4	872	129	169	-80.6
De Witt	12.2	13.4	9.8	6.3	407	37	41	-89.9
Douglas	8.3	12.5	50.6	3.3	238	37	47	-80.3
Du Page	4.1	5.5	34.1	4.2	4,546	638	941	-79.3
Edgar	14.4	16.8	16.7	4.6	416	55	50	-88.0
Edwards	13.8	13.8	0.0	3.2	83	8	6	-92.8
Effingham	10.4	11.0	5.8	7.7	457	46	50	-89.1
Fayette	16.1	17.7	9.9	7.1	465	53	66	-85.8
Ford	9.3	10.9	17.2	3.9	196	30	19	-90.3
Franklin	24.4	22.4	-8.2	6.8	1,515	174	196	-87.1
Fulton	13.7	15.8	15.3	7.6	964	137	150	-84.4
Gallatin	31.2	22.1	-29.2	6.3	293	24	21	-92.8
Greene	15.3	16.5	7.8	5.2	401	34	28	-93.0
Grundy	5.3	6.6	24.5	6.2	406	28	45	-88.9
Hamilton	20.3	16.2	-20.2	5.8	251	39	53	-78.9
Hancock	10.4	14.2	36.5	3.7	389	45	49	-87.4
Hardin	29.0	22.6	-22.1	6.7	184	15	41	-77.7
Henderson	13.0	14.5	11.5	4.0	155	41	28	-81.9
Henry	11.1	11.1	0.0	4.5	1,036	222	243	-76.5
Iroquois	12.2	13.7	12.3	3.9	527	169	170	-67.7
Jackson	23.6	22.9	-3.0	4.0	2,364	405	390	-83.5
Jasper	15.7	13.1	-16.6	8.1	137	22	36	-73.7
Jefferson	14.9	20.3	36.2	5.7	1,602	207	216	-86.5
Jersey	9.2	11.9	29.3	5.2	379	19	10	-97.4
Jo Daviess	7.7	10.3	33.8	3.6	110	33	31	-71.8
Johnson	11.6	17.0	46.6	4.6	265	22	33	-87.5
Kane	9.1	9.0	-1.1	5.2	7,835	653	791	-89.9
Kankakee	15.9	16.1	1.3	7.0	4,314	627	735	-83.0
Kendall	4.0	4.3	7.5	4.7	313	54	78	-75.1
Knox	17.5	17.7	1.1	8.4	1,518	274	260	-82.9
Lake	7.2	7.5	4.2	4.6	7,680	1,129	1,364	-82.2
LaSalle	13.5	12.9	-4.4	5.9	2,238	227	230	-89.7
Lawrence	21.5	17.3	-19.5	5.6	322	60	54	-83.2

FAMILY SUPPORTS

	CHILDREN IN POVERTY (%)			UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2004 (%)	CHILDREN RECEIVING TANF			
	2000	2002	% CHANGE		1996	2003	2004	% CHANGE, 1996-2004
Lee	9.0	10.3	14.4	4.1	440	72	89	-79.8
Livingston	10.2	11.2	9.8	4.2	539	63	80	-85.2
Logan	10.8	12.5	15.7	5.1	564	37	45	-92.0
Macon	19.2	19.3	0.5	5.8	4,866	716	618	-87.3
Macoupin	13.4	13.5	0.7	5.1	1,300	103	117	-91.0
Madison	13.1	14.2	8.4	5.9	9,249	2,049	2,184	-76.4
Marion	17.3	21.4	23.7	7.7	1,735	363	398	-77.1
Marshall	7.0	10.2	45.7	2.9	203	30	25	-87.7
Mason	13.9	16.0	15.1	7.9	542	62	78	-85.6
Massac	16.8	18.3	8.9	3.9	452	97	112	-75.2
McDonough	19.8	17.9	-9.6	2.7	649	81	70	-89.2
McHenry	4.2	4.4	4.8	4.7	1,108	100	114	-89.7
McLean	7.5	9.5	26.7	3.8	2,046	274	300	-85.3
Menard	13.2	10.5	-20.5	5.3	220	41	50	-77.3
Mercer	10.5	11.0	4.8	4.5	316	53	62	-80.4
Monroe	3.3	4.1	24.2	3.7	123	32	20	-83.7
Montgomery	19.2	16.0	-16.7	7.0	804	27	25	-96.9
Morgan	11.0	15.4	40.0	5.3	882	147	208	-76.4
Moultrie	11.2	11.2	0.0	3.6	123	25	22	-82.1
Ogle	8.7	9.3	6.9	5.0	552	55	96	-82.6
Peoria	21.0	19.2	-8.6	4.9	8,678	1,472	1,923	-77.8
Perry	17.3	15.9	-8.1	7.3	650	107	107	-83.5
Piatt	5.1	7.0	37.3	4.0	155	29	24	-84.5
Pike	15.1	16.8	11.3	3.8	361	33	28	-92.2
Pope	22.6	18.0	-20.4	7.4	138	17	20	-85.5
Pulaski	35.4	29.9	-15.5	8.9	639	87	81	-87.3
Putnam	8.9	9.6	7.9	4.1	58	6	5	-91.4
Randolph	14.8	14.6	-1.4	5.4	677	117	143	-78.9
Richland	16.9	15.9	-5.9	5.3	394	70	69	-82.5
Rock Island	16.2	16.4	1.2	4.7	5,187	1,200	1,075	-79.3
St. Clair	21.9	20.1	-8.2	7.4	17,915	3,998	4,197	-76.6
Saline	19.0	24.3	27.9	7.2	1,075	114	108	-90.0
Sangamon	13.2	14.4	9.1	4.9	5,604	958	1,152	-79.4
Schuyler	11.9	11.5	-3.4	4.2	102	11	26	-74.5
Scott	13.2	11.9	-9.8	5.7	99	8	6	-93.9
Shelby	12.4	12.8	3.2	5.0	317	28	23	-92.7
Stark	11.4	12.9	13.2	4.9	83	15	17	-79.5
Stephenson	12.1	14.4	19.0	6.4	1,065	256	351	-67.0
Tazewell	7.9	10.2	29.1	4.8	2,232	250	341	-84.7
Union	20.7	18.7	-9.7	4.8	591	105	105	-82.2
Vermilion	19.3	19.3	0.0	7.3	3,408	661	949	-72.2
Wabash	20.2	14.0	-30.7	9.5	351	35	42	-88.0
Warren	12.1	13.9	14.9	5.2	447	76	78	-82.6
Washington	6.6	9.7	47.0	3.5	174	17	22	-87.4
Wayne	16.5	15.8	-4.2	4.3	386	47	72	-81.3
White	18.1	18.0	-0.6	3.5	425	30	29	-93.2
Whiteside	11.7	12.0	2.6	5.0	962	89	86	-91.1
Will	5.9	7.4	25.4	5.7	7,347	939	1,173	-84.0
Williamson	20.0	19.5	-2.5	5.8	2,047	213	205	-90.0
Winnebago	13.3	16.8	26.3	7.3	8,210	946	1,770	-78.4
Woodford	5.8	6.5	12.1	3.4	341	62	55	-83.9
Chicago	28.5	N/A	N/A	7.2	N/A	45,462	44,410	NA

unemployment rate of 5.6 percent in October 2004, an improvement over the 6.6 percent unemployment rate in October 2003. And after years of declining TANF cases since welfare reform took effect in 1996, the number of child grantees statewide increased between 2003 and 2004, climbing from 77,651 to 81,067, a 4.4 percent jump. Sixty-one counties saw their child TANF grantees increase in those years as well.

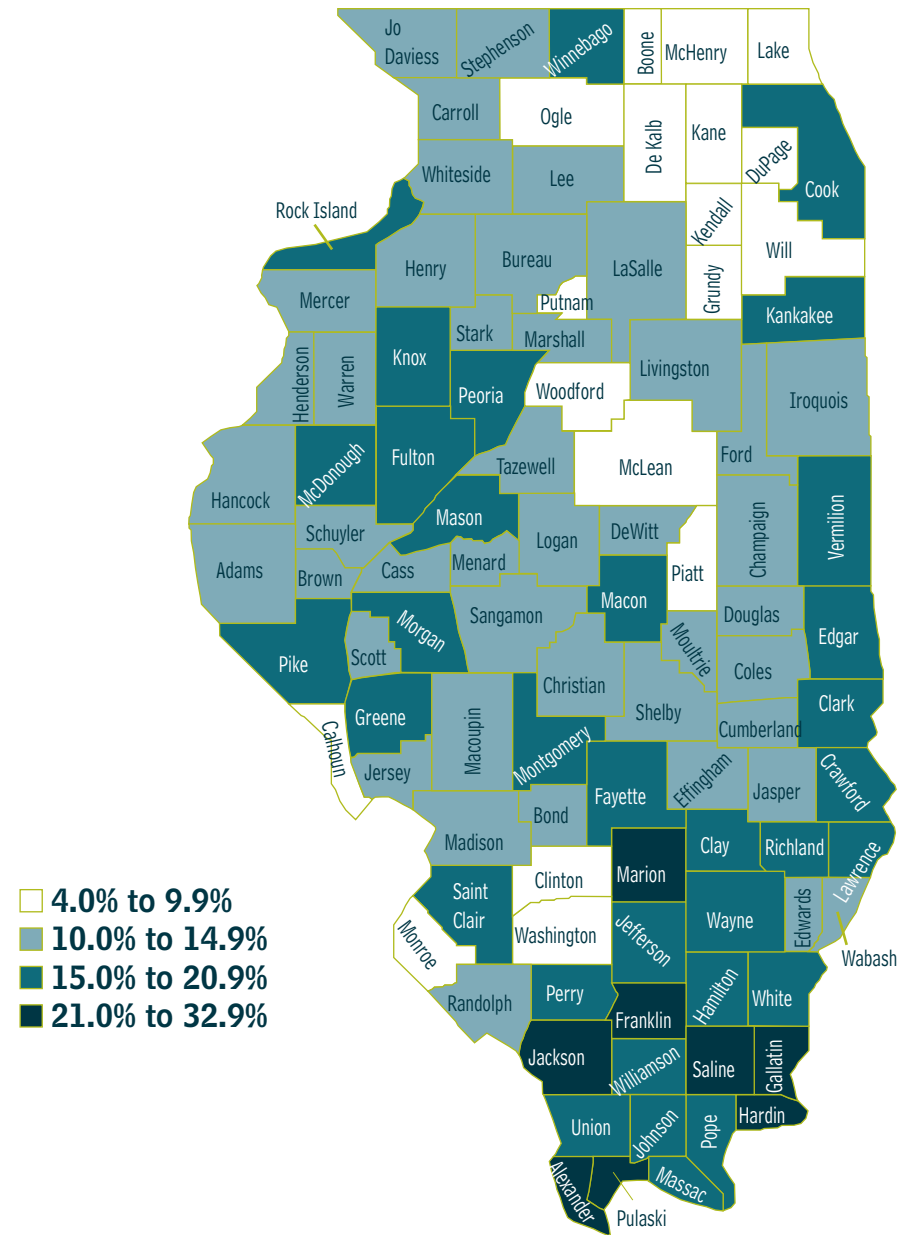
Action Steps

To do what is best for children, public policies must focus on moving their families not just into jobs, but out of poverty. That means supporting parents as they get the necessary skills to improve their earnings and boosting the incomes of poor families. Children's learning is disrupted when their families are forced to move often to find affordable housing. Recommended action steps include:

- Expand FamilyCare health insurance to cover up to 300,000 low-income, working parents.
- Improve the state earned income tax credit so that it is set at 20 percent of the federal credit (about the national average) to provide working families with an even bigger financial benefit.
- Create a system of paid family leave that helps parents take time off for family reasons such as the birth of a child or an illness.

Children in Poverty, 2002

More than one in 10 Illinois children (15.3 percent) lived in poverty in 2002. The highest concentrations of child poverty are in the southern tip of Illinois and in many of the state's urban areas. Children who grow up poor are more likely to experience a range of troubling outcomes, including developmental delays and learning disabilities. To do what is best for children, public policies must focus on moving their families not just into jobs, but out of poverty. That means supporting parents as they get the necessary skills to improve their earnings and boosting the incomes of poor families.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Children's Basic Needs Center on Strong Families and Communities

By Kevin Limbeck, Executive Director
Family Focus, Inc.

What are the basic needs? Easy answer: food, shelter, safety. However, when you are talking about the basic needs of a child, the answer is not so simple.

Children need a loving family and a safe and secure world in which to grow healthy and strong. They need parents who have jobs that pay enough to support a family. They need safe communities, affordable health care, quality education from the earliest years through high school. Most of all, they need parents with the time and energy to care for them, and the spirit to show them all that life can be.

All of a child's basic needs center on families and communities. When a parent is strong and supported by a solid community, then jobs, health care, education—all the factors that make up a healthy childhood—fall into place.

At Family Focus, we provide for children by supporting families. Immigrant parents, teen parents, parents in low-income neighborhoods, parents without jobs and individual families everywhere want to do their best as parents. Our job is to remove the various barriers in their way.

How do we provide for the basic needs of children?

When a parent is strong and supported by a solid community, then jobs, health care, education—all the factors that make up a healthy childhood—fall into place.

- By teaching parents about the early social and emotional development of children.
- By providing ESL and GED classes and citizenship assistance to immigrant parents.
- By offering emotional support and parenting classes for pregnant and parenting teens.
- By assisting grandparents raising grandchildren to get the health services they need.
- By providing enriching after school activities and homework help.
- By working to form strong ties between parents and their children's schools.
- By advocating for a parent with a physician, teacher, public agency.

By doing whatever it take—providing support tailored to the needs of each individual family—we help parents to raise children with hope and possibility.

Kevin Limbeck (pictured below) is the executive director of Family Focus, Inc., a provider of family support services in the Chicago area. The mission of Family Focus is to promote the well-being of children from birth by supporting and strengthening their families in and with their communities. For 28 years, Limbeck has been engaged in a variety of family support and community development strategies in metropolitan Chicago. He has been executive director of Family Focus, Inc. for four years and previously held the positions of vice president of strategic planning and public policy for the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, executive director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and executive director of United Neighborhood Organization of Little Village.

