

# HB 2968 (2015) Poverty Workgroup

## FOUNDATIONAL INFORMATION AND OREGON CONTEXT

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### INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2968 (2015) directs the Oregon Chief Education Officer to convene a work group with the specific charge to prepare a report on how State School Fund expenditures relate to the educational achievements of students from families navigating poverty. The report is to be delivered to an interim Committee of the Legislature by November 15, 2015. The report may include recommendations for Legislation.

The Work Group was asked to examine a large amount of information, including Federal, State, and local funding in general and the poverty weight that is used for State School Fund (SSF) distributions in particular. The Oregon Department of Education, which administers Federal and State programs and distributes the SSF will present this information to the Work Group on October 1, 2015.

In advance of the October 1 meeting, this document is designed to give work group members a common understanding of the most current facts about poverty in Oregon, a survey and analysis of the barriers associated with increasing academic achievement for students navigating poverty, and an identification of services beyond education that already exist. This report has been extensively researched and those sources cited to allow readers to delve more deeply into any of the topics.

### OREGON FACTS

In the State of Oregon there is a total population of 3,970,239 with about 1.2 million youth ages 0-24 (United States Census Bureau, 2012). There were 570,857 students enrolled in K-12 public schools in the 2014-15 school year. Within Oregon students of color represent 36% of the student population, with the fastest growing group of students of color being Hispanic/Latino students, who represent 22% of the overall student population (OEIB, 2015).

Oregon has an unemployment rate of 5.3%, a food insecurity rate of 15.8%, and despite the talents and promise students bring to schools every day, Oregon has an overall graduation rate of 71.98%, one of the lowest in the country. Moreover, a recent longitudinal study indicates that only 34% of students in poverty in Oregon; 11.5% of Hispanic/Latino students; 15.1% of African American students; and 13.7% of Native American students earn a post-secondary credential by the age of 25 (OregonLearns, n.d.).

### Poverty Statistics in Oregon

Statistics	Source
In 2014, 25% (1 in 4) children live in poverty, an increase of 30% since 2008	Children First for Oregon. 2014

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over half (53%) of children whose parents do not have a high school degree live in poor families</li> <li>• Over a quarter (27%) of children in poor families do not have an employed parent</li> </ul>	Oregon data from National Center for Children in Poverty, 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18% families with children under the age of 18 currently live in poverty</li> <li>• For families navigating below the poverty level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 29% of have a head of household with less than a high school education</li> <li>- 22% of families there is no wage earner</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Oregon data from United States Census Bureau, 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty rates in the rural regions are higher than urban areas</li> <li>• Residents in rural areas are associated with having less educational attainment, lower incomes, and higher unemployment rates</li> </ul>	Oregon data from U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2013

For detailed information on statewide poverty rates by county broken down by racial/ethnic categories see Appendix A.

### **COMMON BARRIERS**

Miller, Mastuera, Chao, and Sadowski (2004) identify six elements of self-sufficiency required to make, what is often characterized as “deep and wide,” steps out of poverty. We have organized the barriers with these element headings.

#### *1. Income and economic assets*

Individuals with a high school diploma and no postsecondary degrees or certificates earn a median monthly salary of \$2,636, which covers basic costs of raising children: transportation (\$459), child care (\$1,181), food (\$546), and housing (\$692); and excludes healthcare (\$1,279) and taxes and other necessities (\$732) (The Annie E. Casey Foundation [AECF], 2014).

In addition to difficulties meeting the basic costs of living, families face job-related barriers like inflexible schedules, low wages, and minimal or no benefits. The barriers associated with working these types of jobs often directly impact employment options. For example, lack of transportation or health benefits for children were found to be primary reasons for some mothers not completing welfare-to-work programs (Pierre, Layzer, & Barnes, 1995). Families navigating poverty may even have work multiple low-paying jobs in order to meet all of their financial needs (Krahn, 1991).

Many families, particularly those with children age 5 or younger had to change, quit, or refuse a job offer due to child care problems (as cited in AECF, 2014). They also face other various child care related barriers:

- Limited choices on high-quality, flexible and reliable child care, given their income-level and inflexible work schedules. Oregon was reported as one of the least affordable states for infant and four-year-old care in a child care center setting for a married couple in 2012 (as cited on Oregon Secretary of State [OSOS], 2014).
- Family income is not keeping pace with child care costs, with the 2012 median income for a single mother household was ranked 37<sup>th</sup> (below \$30,000 consistently) when compared to other states and the District of Columbia, and the median income for a married couple was ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the country (Oregon Secretary of State [OSOS], 2014) Difficulties transitioning into the workforce or to increase their earning potential (OSOS, 2015)

## 2. Education and Skills

### Barriers for Adults

- Individuals who attempt to increase their job marketability by pursuing higher education often face rising costs in tuition and inflexible work schedules that impede their ability to earn a certificate or degree (Gault, Reichlin, & Román, 2014).
- Individuals with only a high school diploma face steep competition in today's job market because of a higher demand from employers for a workforce with some level of higher education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).
- Lack of affordable child care is a significant barrier to adults seeking to complete their GED and to obtain a community college degree or certificate (OSOS, 2015).

### Barriers for Children

- Common methods of assessing academic and social/emotional readiness tend to classify more students navigating poverty as not ready for kindergarten

### ASSET BASED PERSPECTIVE

The Chief Education Office has adopted an asset-based perspective to thinking, writing, and talking about all students, families, and communities across the educational continuum. This is in contrast to a more typical deficit-based perspective often used with good intention to group students for the purposes of reporting, requesting resources or conducting analysis. Deficit thinking is the practice of having lower expectations for certain groups of people based on demographics or characteristics that they share. In doing so, an "at-risk" narrative is formed, in which students navigating poverty, students of color, and/or historically underserved groups and their families are pathologized and marginalized. An asset-based paradigm means recognizing and amplifying the strengths each person brings to the community and not associating systemic barriers with the students and families.

In researching and then communicating in this document the topic of poverty, we have encountered a range of terminology that fall on the spectrum of more asset or deficit based thinking. For example, the term "poor students" fits within our definition of a deficit-based construct. Our preferred term is "students navigating poverty" and our perspective on this is that all students are rich with assets and potential, regardless of their current economic circumstances. Where appropriate, we have footnoted particularly illustrative examples of language used in research that is more deficit based and our suggestions about alternative ways of looking at and communicating about the subject.

(ACEF, 2013; Reardon, 2011). This gap continues in the later years, where students navigating poverty continue to lag behind their peers academically and developmentally (ACEF, 2013).

- Chang and Romero (2008) found that children navigating poverty are more likely to be chronically absent in kindergarten, first and fifth grades. Attendance matters in educational context because students with chronic non-attendance during kindergarten had the lowest performance in reading and math in fifth grade (Chang & Romero, 2008).

### *3. Housing and Surroundings*

- In 2013, 39% of children were reported to be living in households with a high housing cost burden (ACEF, 2015).
- Families and children navigating poverty are more likely to live in “underprivileged<sup>1</sup>” neighborhoods (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 2000) with high crime rates, poor-quality housing, and a shortage of access to child care or enriching after-school activities for children (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2014).
- Schools in “underprivileged<sup>2</sup>” neighborhoods could include schools with insufficient funding (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 2000) and that are categorized as “low-performing” (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2014).

### *4. Access to Health Care and other needed Social Services*

#### Health and Mental care

- Pregnant women with inadequate nutrition and chronic health conditions associated with poverty, such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes, are at risk of delivering babies with low birth weight (ACEF, 2009). Low birth weight can lead to health and developmental problems and is a leading cause of infant mortality (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).
- Families navigating poverty face constant economic insecurity, which has been associated with more daily stress and a higher likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, substance abuse or domestic violence compared to higher-income families. These stresses have an impact on children due to the compromised parenting skills of individuals experiencing such barriers (ACEF, 2014)
- Parents navigating poverty with young children are nearly three times more likely to report having poor or fair mental health than parents with higher income levels (as cited in ACEF, 2014).
- Some researchers who are beginning to explore the effects of poverty on brain functioning have found potential negative impact on health, mental health and cognitive functioning (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, & Zhao 2013;

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<sup>1</sup> We have used the term “underprivileged” because it comes directly from publication text, though through our commitment to use Asset Based language, we recommend using a phrase like “historically underserved” in this context. Doing so, pivots away from blaming the family and instead acknowledges our collective set of systems ineffectiveness at providing the services/supports the referenced families need to thrive.

<sup>2</sup> Same note as reference #1 above.

Shah, Mullainathan & Shafir, 2012). For children, such impacts are especially concerning in their early years, when the brain development is most rapid (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child [NSCDC], 2005/2014).

- Others have found that excessively stressful conditions early in childhood (i.e. adverse childhood experiences due to abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction) have been linked to a number of changes in the brain that compromise healthy development (NSCDC, 2005/2014). Stress can be categorized into three types:

Type of Stress	Characteristics
Positive	Short-lived Example: Stress experienced on the first day of school Helps a child develop coping skills and a healthy stress response system
Tolerable	More serious Example: When a loved one dies Not damaging if a child has the buffering support of protective, adult relationships
Toxic	Lasts longer Occurs in the absence of consistent supportive relationships Potentially lead to long-term problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health

Compared to children from families with higher income, children from families navigating poverty are more likely to experience toxic stress (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011 ) and experience developmental delays (as cited in Shonkoff, 2013).

#### Other social services – Child development

Families navigating poverty may have restricted resources to supplement their children’s schooling with educational materials (e.g. books, toys, and computers), services (e.g. tutor, therapists), and enrichment-type educational experience (e.g. museums, theaters, sports, summer camp)(Haveman & Wolfe, 1994). Such experiences are expensive, costing about \$10,000 per child per year, on average, for families with incomes above \$135,000 (Duncan & Munane, 2011).

There is a lasting effect of poverty: children raised in families navigating poverty are more likely to continue to navigate poverty when they become adults (Corcoran, 1995), and this likelihood increases as the duration of poverty lengthens (Wagmiller & Adelman, 2009). This group of children was also more

likely to experience multiple family transitions, move regularly, and change schools more frequently (Teachman, 2008). These create barriers like academic regression and discontinuity in curriculum and loss of social networks.

#### *5. Close Personal Ties, as well as Networks to Others*

The stress related to facing constant economic insecurity for families navigating poverty could be alleviated when parents have strong support networks of family or friends to help (AECF, 2014). Individuals who are socially isolated are more likely to be navigating poverty than individuals with larger circles of friends (Finney, Kapadia & Peters, 2015).

Mothers with low levels of emotional (e.g., access to family/friends to talk to during troubling times) and instrumental (e.g., access to family/friends for rides to the doctor) support

- a) Had lower levels of literacy and had a lower rate of high school completion;
- b) Demonstrated significantly less warmth and provided less stimulating learning environments than mothers with higher levels of support; and
- c) Received welfare services long-term (Fram, 2003).

#### *6. Personal resourcefulness and leadership abilities*

A major barrier is the limitation in the focus of federal programs. There are many federal programs designed to assist families navigating poverty, including those that provide assistance by subsidizing basics such as food, health care, housing and child care, and those that provide added income, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to compensate for low wages and irregular employment (Boots, 2010). Although such programs help to some degree, they are limited in their effectiveness because these programs often only focused on either children or parents, and not both (Ascend, 2014). This creates a particular barrier for parents who wish to advance in their work place because they do not have the flexibility in their schedules.

Further, families often lack information of the full range of programs that could benefit them and their children (Boots, 2010). They need access to the supports that would help them advocate for their family. They experience difficulties navigating the complexities varying agency authorities, eligibility criteria, and program requirements at the federal, state or local level (Boots, 2010). Strict eligibility criteria for some of the programs put families at risk for losing the services or benefits they most need while working towards financial stability (de Cuba, Harker, Weiss, Scully, Chilton, & Coleman, 2013).

### **CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The common barriers faced by families navigating poverty described above touch many aspects of families' lives, and are often addressed by state, federal and local programs outside of the education system. Thus, the complexity of the issues families in poverty face provided the impetus for gathering information regarding what current programs and services exist outside of the education system to provide these supports. We conducted our own searches, and worked with other state-level agency representatives (Department of Human Services, Oregon Health Authority, etc.) and local regional groups in order to identify some of the major programs and services. These inquiries led to the identification of over

100 types of programs and services fulfilling different family needs. Table 1 below provides a summary list of some of the major state and federal programs serving families navigating poverty.

**Table 1. Major State/Federal Poverty Programs and Services**

Programs	Level	Population served	Service Provided	Description of Organization	Hyperlink to site
DHS (Oregon Department of Human Services)	State	Family unit	Many	DHS provides direct services to more than 1 million Oregonians each year. These services provide a key safety net for those in our society who are most vulnerable or who are at a difficult place in their life.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/aboutdhs/Pages/index.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/aboutdhs/Pages/index.aspx</a>
211Info	State	Family unit	Information on services	Accessible by phone and email only, 211info directs people to services in OR that assist families navigating poverty. Major themes of these services include assistance with family, food, emergency, energy, and housing.	<a href="http://211info.org/">http://211info.org/</a>
Community Developmental Disabilities Program (CDDP)	State	Disabled Children and Families	Housing and support	Services through CDDP are offered to children and families and range from in home family support, intensive in-home supports and 24-hour services in foster care or residential placement.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/DD/Pages/about_us.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/DD/Pages/about_us.aspx</a>
OED (Oregon Employment Department)	State	Parents	Employment	OED acts as a support for economic stability for Oregonians and communities during times of unemployment through the payment of unemployment benefits. They serve businesses by recruiting and referring the best qualified applicants to jobs, and provide resources to diverse job seekers in support of their employment needs. Develop and distribute quality workforce and economic information to promote informed decision making.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/Agency/Pages/Mission.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/Agency/Pages/Mission.aspx</a>
SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	State	Family unit	Food and nutrition	The Food and Nutrition Service works with State agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits. FNS also works with State partners and the retail community to improve program administration and ensure program integrity.	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap">http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap</a>
OHA (Oregon Health Authority)	State	Family Unit	Health care	The Oregon Health Authority is at the forefront of lowering and containing costs, improving quality and increasing access to health care in order to improve the lifelong health of Oregonians.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/oha/Pages/about_us.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/oha/Pages/about_us.aspx</a>
Oregon State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	State	Children	Healthcare	SCHIP allows Oregon to offer health insurance for eligible children, up to age 19, who are not already insured.	<a href="http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1611">http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1611</a>
Addictions and Mental Health Services - OHA	State	Children/Family Unit	Mental health	This program through OHA is working to improve mental health services to children in Oregon by: Involving parents and youth in healthcare decisions, delivering mental health services in the community, and improving	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/Pages/children-mental-health.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/Pages/children-mental-health.aspx</a>

				inter-agency coordination.	
ERDC (Employment Related Day Care)	State	Parents	Childcare	The Employment-Related Day Care program (ERDC) helps eligible low-income families pay for child care while they are working. ERDC is a subsidy program, meaning eligible families still pay part of the child care cost.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/CHILD-CARE/Pages/index.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/CHILD-CARE/Pages/index.aspx</a>
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	State	Parents	Financial Assistance	The Earned Income Tax Credit, EITC or EIC, is a benefit for working people with low to moderate income. To qualify, you must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if you do not owe any tax or are not required to file. EITC reduces the amount of tax you owe and may give you a refund.	<a href="http://www.irs.gov/Credits-&amp;-Deductions/Individuals/Earned-Income-Tax-Credit">http://www.irs.gov/Credits-&amp;-Deductions/Individuals/Earned-Income-Tax-Credit</a>
Child Tax Credit (CTC)	State	Parents	Financial Assistance	This credit is for people who have a qualifying child. It can be claimed in addition to the Credit for Child and Dependent Care expenses	<a href="http://www.irs.gov/uac/Ten-Facts-about-the-Child-Tax-Credit">http://www.irs.gov/uac/Ten-Facts-about-the-Child-Tax-Credit</a>
TRIO Programs	Federal	Students	Many	The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs.	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html</a>
WIC (Women, Infant, and Children)	Federal	Mothers and children	Food	WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. This public health program is designed to improve health outcomes and influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in targeted, at-risk populations. Nutrition education is the cornerstone of the WIC Program.	<a href="https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/wic/Pages/index.aspx">https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/wic/Pages/index.aspx</a>
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Federal	Family unit	Cash assistance	The TANF program provides cash assistance to low-income families with children while they strive to become self-sufficient. Cash assistance is intended to meet a family's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and utilities. Most cash benefits in Oregon are issued via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. This is also known as an Oregon Trail Card.	<a href="http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/CASH/Pages/Index.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/CASH/Pages/Index.aspx</a>
Medicaid	Federal/State	Family unit	Medical assistance	Medicaid provides health coverage to millions of Americans, including eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. Medicaid is administered by states, according to federal requirements. The program is funded jointly by states and the federal government.	<a href="http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/medicaid-and-chip-program-information.html">http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/medicaid-and-chip-program-information.html</a>
Oregon Head Start Association (OHSA)	Federal	Pre-k	Education	The Oregon Head Start Association (OHSA) is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit association which provides leadership, advocacy, and training for Oregon Head Start Pre-Kindergarten (OPK), Head Start (HS), and Early Head Start (EHS) programs.	<a href="http://www.ohsa.net/index.php/ohsa">http://www.ohsa.net/index.php/ohsa</a>

LIEAP (Oregon Low Income Energy Assistance Program)	Federal	Family unit	Energy assistance	Federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. LIEAP is an assistance program designed to help low income households with home heating costs.	<a href="http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1571">http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1571</a>
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As we collected information from various agency and local leaders, we discovered that most groups at the state and local level use the services provided by 211info (for more details, go to <http://211info.org/> ) to identify services for families. 211info provides a guide to health and social services for families in Oregon and Southwest Washington. They use their database of service providers to direct customers to supports when they call in or search their website for resources (see Appendix B for more info on this resource). 211info, with funding from the State of Oregon, has created a sizeable database of many of the services and programs that support families navigating poverty at the local, state and federal levels. Their database codes service providers by the type of need they fulfill and then further identifies the type of service or program. In order to provide this workgroup an extensive overview of the types of poverty services and programs at the local, state, and federal level, we requested reports from 211info that identify the number and type of services providers for each Oregon county and for the State of Oregon as a whole. These reports are included as a resource in Appendix C of the report.

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Appendix A. State and County-wide Poverty Rates by Racial/Ethnic Categories  
Appendix B. Info211 Infographic  
Appendix C. Info211 Services by County and by State

