

Resource Guide:

Poverty versus Neglect in North Carolina



Thank you for your completion of the learning module, Poverty vs. Neglect in North Carolina. This resource guide is available to help you review the main points of the training and connect you with additional resources.

If you have specific questions, please contact Institute for Family Education Manager, Tori Brasher-Weathers: tbrasher@chsnc.org

Defining Vocabulary

- **Poverty:** unable to achieve a minimum, decent standard of living that allows them to participate fully in mainstream society. Up to and including a family's inability to feed, clothe, or house themselves and/or their children.
- **Neglect:** alleged or substantiated negligent treatment or maltreatment, including failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or care.
- **Maltreatment:** substantiated and/or unsubstantiated victims with maltreatment reports, or those identified through an alternative response system. Maltreatment types include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and medical neglect.

Exploring Poverty in the United States and North Carolina

- 1964 - Based on US President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of the War on Poverty, poverty is measured in the US.
- 1967 - US Census Bureau publishes the first poverty measures and estimates. The Bureau and the United States Office of Management and Budget are tasked with publishing annual national poverty estimates.
- The US Census Bureau and Office of Management and Budget uses a set of measures called "thresholds" which vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty.
- The official federal poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or non-cash benefits such as public housing, Medicaid, TANF, and/or SNAP.
- Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) uses information from the federal definition of poverty and includes information from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- SPM includes finances from government programs such as public housing, and the program's impact on low-income families.
- SPM also accounts for other measures which impact family poverty including, federal taxes, state taxes, childcare costs and medical expenses.
- Another commonly used definition of the word poverty is when a family is unable to achieve a minimum, decent standard of living that allows them to participate fully in mainstream society.
- This can include a family's inability to feed, clothe, or house themselves and/or their children.
- North Carolina's poverty rate according to the 2020 US Census report and 2022 American Community Survey
 - NC-14%
 - US- 12.6%
- Poverty by Age in North Carolina
 - Under 18 years of age: 17.2%
 - 18 - 64 years of age: 11.7%
 - 65 years and older: 10.9%
- Poverty can have multiple influences on a family's wellbeing; however, just because a family lives in the conditions of poverty, does not mean they are intentionally neglectful of their children.
- Black, Hispanic, Latinx, and Native American families live within a higher rate of poverty.

CAPTA: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

- The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment (CAPTA) is federal legislation that establishes the national definitions of child abuse and neglect.
- CAPTA assigns the responsibilities of the federal government to support states with prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

Neglect and Maltreatment

- Federal definition of neglect: Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical harm, emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a minor.
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services definition of Neglect- Neglect and abuse are both forms of maltreatment. Each type of maltreatment is distinct. Abuse is the physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment of a child. Neglect is the failure to give children the

necessary care they need.

Reporting Abuse and Mandated Reporters

- Identified types of maltreatment in North Carolina:
 - Neglect
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Physical Abuse
 - Medical Abuse
 - Psychological Maltreatment
 - Other Maltreatment
- North Carolina has a reporting system called universal mandated reporting, which means any person or institution is required to report any alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of a juvenile (child) under the age of 18 to their county Department of Social Services.
- The federal government is supposed to provide resources to communities to create and implement successful and comprehensive child and family protection strategy.
- The varying definitions of neglect, abuse, and maltreatment across the United States make it difficult to understand the underlying conditions, concerns, and needs of communities and families.
- Different reporting laws across the US can result in unwarranted, poor-quality reports that negatively impact families and strain the child welfare system.
- Mistaking poverty for neglect contributes to the following:
 - High rates of child neglect cases and child welfare involvement for families already experiencing the fragility of poverty.
 - Undue stress of children and their caregivers if unwarranted.
 - Stress on families with the removal of children, termination of parent rights, and reunification requirements which put families experiencing poverty in a more impoverished state.

Be the Change

Issues of poverty are not easy; however there are opportunities to advocate and support your family or community by doing the following:

01

- Frequently visit your state and local government webpages to keep up with the legislation and decisions made or are proposed that can impact your family or community.

02

- Learn about all of the federal, state, and non-profit supports available in your community to support family wellbeing and help families access what they need.

03

- If you decide to relocate to another county within your current state or move to another state, review the laws and policies surround family wellbeing, maltreatment and services available to support families in preserving their positive wellbeing.

04

- Use your power as a voter, by following the beliefs of the lawmakers in your local government, state government, and federal government to ensure the electorate you vote for aligns to your beliefs.



05

- Learn about the local non-profits agency, advocacy groups, and think tanks available to support you in using your voice, gifts, and talents to help your family or community.

Key Quotes from the Training

“Poverty is a risk factor for neglect, but poverty does not equate to neglect. The presence of poverty alone does not mean a child is unsafe, unloved, or that the parent is unfit.”

—Jerry Milner, Co-Founder & Director of Family Justice Group and David Kelly, Co-Founder & Director of Family Justice Group (Both formerly at the Children’s Bureau)

“Poverty is a measure, a number calculated by two federal government agencies to determine at what income level a person or family cannot pay for their basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter).”

“Without consistency in applying the guidelines and policies associated with poverty, neglect and maltreatment, reporting can be used as a form of community policing.”

“You cannot dream of becoming something you do not know about. You have to learn to dream big. Education exposes you to what the world has to offer, to the possibilities open to you.”

-Sonia Sotomayor, First Latina Supreme Court Justice

“A system where families and communities feel as if they cannot depend on their local, state, and government services when needed limits the options families have when they are in dire need of support.”

“The lack of consistent definitions of maltreatment, neglect and understanding the issues of poverty has caused there to be various interpretations of family needs and safety. The federal poverty measure does not consider the geographical context of what people experience from the differences across the geography of the United States of America.”



1. “It is not enough to be compassionate; you must act.”
-Dalai Lama, Lhamo Thondup
What does this quote mean for you, your family, or your community? How can compassion lead to action?
2. **Based on your knowledge and experiences, share how you believe families experience poverty. How does a family’s experience impact their community?**
3. **Why are Black/African American, Latinx, and Native Americans at a greater rate of poverty than other groups? What could be done to close the wide gap in the poverty rate?**
4. **What impact does not having a federal definition or state definition of neglect and maltreatment have on families and communities? If the effects are negative, how do we improve them to best support families?**

Discussion Questions for Continued Dialogue

Digital Resources

- » **The United States Census Bureau Poverty Threshold:**
<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>
- » **Casey Family Programs-Community Opportunity Maps:**
<https://community-opportunity-map.casey.org/cailive?state=North+Carolina&tab=economy&searchType=state>
- » **Ten Important Questions about Child Poverty and Family Economic Hardship:**
<https://www.nccp.org/publication/ten-important-questions-about-child-poverty-and-family-economic-hardship>
- » **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Adverse Childhood Experiences:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>
- » **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: About Child Abuse and Neglect:**
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>
- » **Institute for Family-Seen Out Loud Podcast Series:**
<https://podcasts.instituteforfamily.org/seen-out-loud/>
- » **United States Census Bureau-Poverty the history of measure:**
https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2014/demo/poverty_measure-history.html

