

Report to Johnson County Board of Supervisors

Johnson County Poverty Action Planning

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I have prepared the following report for the Johnson County Board of Supervisors to detail the work of the various issue groups that have worked on an action plan that relates to poverty in Johnson County.

To assist in the overall coordination of the three issue areas I prepared information to assist the group that included a listing of the key actions that were identified by each issue area. These are broader than what the groups put on their individual calendars but what they agreed were key issues. They are broken down per what each group identified in the planning session.

Next I have provided each of the three action plans that were developed.

Next I have given a brief overview of items that were: 1) unique to one group; 2) common to all of the groups; or 3) somewhat related to each other.

Finally I have sorted through all of the key actions and categorized them into a few areas that have similar intents: 1) advocacy, 2) partnering, 3) research & study, 4) community awareness, 5) new and expanded programs, 6) training, and 7) funding and resources.

Childcare:

Partners & Community Awareness:

Outreach—to large employers to support early childhood

Engage—faith communities

Community awareness—and messaging to different segments of the community

Transportation—options to improve accessibility

Parent leave—advocacy

Early educator discounts—from local businesses such as Hy-Vee

Enlist—business partners to support aspects of the plan

Recognition—of early childhood profession, such as a shout out from the Iowa Football program at the Nebraska home game

Community awareness—activities that raise awareness of early childhood issues and challenges

Specific business outreach—and awareness, not just large employers

Get buy-in—by asking the end users for input

Get buy-in—by crafting concise messages

Childcare Practices:

Expand—the crisis childcare program

Expand—the safe families program

Expand—part day pre-schools to full day programs

Expand and enhance—sick child, evening, and weekend programs

Partner—with the Kirkwood Early Childhood program

Teacher scholarships—are available from the Association of Educators of Young Children (AEYC) program

Incentivize—programs to take Child Care Assistance (CCA) funds

Incentivize—ways to encourage providers to open centers

Improve wages using the AEYC programs that can help

Improve access—by addressing transportation issues

Partner—with intergenerational resources and seniors as resources to provide services

Professional development—for providers

Cultural competency training—for providers

Advocacy:

Cost benefit analysis—show the positive return on investing in childcare

Tax incentives—for early childhood research and development

Increase funding—for Head Start programs

Collect data—about resources and needs and organize into a user-friendly format

Seek regional reimbursement rates—for CCA

Legislative advocacy—for income eligibility

Legislative advocacy—for increased reimbursement rates

Legislative advocacy—for improving CCA

Find out—what other communities are doing to see if there are lessons to learn

Bring back—ideas that can be adapted and adopted in Johnson County

Income, Employment, and Education:

Best Practices and Collaboration:

Study poverty and issues related to it in Johnson County

Survey consumers and get their feedback about what might help

Research best practices in other communities

Develop an understanding of the different segments of the community affected

Identify resources and projects that might succeed

Do a cost benefit analysis that demonstrates there is a good return on investment

Meet with experts

Info-graphics on Norstrum and Frontier and their positive impact and efforts

Working with Businesses and Creating New Programs:

Identify J. County employers with the highest staffing needs

Talk with employers about barriers to good wages and benefits

Create on-line resources list and links that can assist immigrants & refugees

Develop a pilot program for employers and businesses

Seek and submit grants that can add resources to help foster programs

Host a summit with ICAD, the Chamber, U of I., Workforce Development & business leaders to communicate and collaborate

Conduct an assessment of transit needs to help people get to their employment and enhance regional transportation options

Advocacy and Communication to the Public:

Develop an advocacy agenda and a sequence of steps that will be effective

Develop an agreed upon definition of “employee first”

Identify paths of influence

Develop community-wide talking points—“same story/same voice”

Develop education resources about the need for jobs in the trade unions

Meet with legislators, educators, and local government representatives about ways to change policies and practices

Scale up already existing successful programs

Use technology like Skype, Facebook and the like to share messages and help promote the plan

Housing:

Education and Outreach:

Apply pressure to policy makers

Develop a message that relates to “what’s in it for me”

Set in motion powerful advocates and champions

Engage landlords

Have a broad community education campaign

Apply pressure in the private sector

Use a common language for cohesive, concise messages

Move those that are “gatekeepers” who can overcome barriers

Identify model communities

Use a public health “lens” for data and interventions (as well as other lenses)

Find private sector champions

Utilize the “Frameworks” training (this is a model for how to frame issues)

Help support the Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition and utilize it as a frontline of advocacy

Make JCAHC meaningful and action oriented

Resources and Policy Changes:

Get funding for new housing options

Improve homeowner resources

Increase the diversity of units available

Expand inclusionary housing ordinances

City /county/other leaders seek funding to support efforts

Use public health as a neutral facilitator

Expand rental opportunities

Develop a revolving fund to help license professional immigrants

Plans and Strategies:

Organize a community wide strategic plan around this issue

Engage the community around the plan

Develop a list of specific success strategies including efforts that worked in other communities

Use a community based participator research method that gets those affected by the issue to the table

Set benchmarks for incremental success

Track the net housing units that are available

Develop a systems map of groups needing service and the types of service available

Identify the resources needed (eg.: the number of rental units needed)

Identify current projects underway in our community and around the state

For this work group: identify what our members need to learn about; what help we need; and what our top priorities are

Action Plan to Address Housing

Name	Launch	Activities 30-60 days	60-90 days	90-180 days	Victory
Education & Outreach	<p>Identify training resource for “Frameworks”</p> <p>I.D. resources to use & develop</p>	<p>I.D. audience for new messaging Learn to craft message</p> <p>Craft tailored messages</p>	<p>Learn what is happening with other plans results develop list of orgs/folks to benefit from Frameworks & get funding</p>	<p>Finalize list to attend & organize training Communication plan; who, when, with whom, includes landlords & business</p>	<p>Frameworks training is completed & utilized to communicate</p>
Resources Laws & Policies	<p>Identify appropriate spokespersons</p> <p>Coordinated with local coalition</p>	<p>I.D. local power brokers (in different arenas) Advocate local government to include housing in budgets Read council packets & attend</p>	<p>Advise local governments & include what housing partnership & others are doing</p>	<p>Shape housing policy impacting future investment Have action plan in place for on-going effort & repeat each year</p>	<p>Housing is a standing appropriation in local budgets</p>
Plans and Strategies	<p>Asset systems maps of groups—or visual map of county need</p>	<p>Organize series of community meetings (on-going) Engage affordable housing experts Engage experts in various risk areas</p>	<p>Best practice research from other communities Develop data based community goals</p>	<p>Incorporate advocacy, knowledge & goals Develop benchmarks for incremental success</p>	<p>Publish & distribute intentional strategic plan</p>

				Create plan accountability, keep it alive	

Action Plan to Address Childcare and Intergenerational Poverty

Name	Launch	Activities 30-60 days	60-90 days	90-180 days	Victory
Partner & Community Awareness	Develop a Clear Communication plan	Who: CCR&R, ECI. IA Women's Fdtn Other stake holders What: media outlets Branded campaign? Simple free journalism?	I.D. sources of info Methods to gather Gather data Continue collaboration with Chamber & existing partners	Gather stories from Providers Parents Businesses Launch campaign	Business reacts to pressure to change benefits, plans/supports for employees related to childcare
Child Care Practices	Meet with Safe families & Crisis Child care programs	I.D. current professional dev. Resources Which programs have best chance to expand MOU for partners & services	Survey providers to I.D. barriers & opportunities Explore funding options to expand	Sick childcare/ Evening weekend expansion looked at, is it feasible?	Sick childcare weekend & evening programs expanded and in place.
Advocacy	Start collaboration With the Iowa Women's Foundation	Learn history of past legislative attempts Organize data I.D. local & state partners Match messages to other initiatives	Collaborate w/ state & local partners (shared advocacy Collaboration with IA state agencies	Craft stories to message with partners Connect to supportive legislators	Positive network built with legislators Higher eligibility threshold for CCA
				Deferred to future time: advocacy for reimbursement rates	Also deferred: efforts for Head Start

Action Plan to Address Income, Employment, and Education

Name	Launch	Activities 30-60 days	60-90 days	90-180 days	Victory
<i>Best Practice & Collaboration</i>	Assemble & convene a committee of content experts	Enlist focus group facilitators Find out who are vulnerable employers	Focus group questions based on results data Convene focus groups for people & workers experiencing poverty	Info-graphics & cost/benefit Multiple case statements	Case statement & results of best practice and focus-groups is in place
<i>Work with Businesses & Creating New Programs</i>	Gather data from Employers & identify key stakeholders	Ask employers about barriers Needs identified Summit with ICAD, U of I, Workforce Dev. & Chamber	Survey providers to I.D. barriers & opportunities Explore funding options to expand	Utilize case statements & results from group 1 to develop grants and seek funds	Pilot program in place
<i>Advocacy & Communication</i>	Asset map & framework for stakeholders—visual map of county need	One page talking points: same story same voice—connects education, employment & income Advocacy training Form leadership group	Use advocacy agenda & meet business leaders people of influence Community wide messaging in place	Income moving to \$16/\$26 Education improving to meet workforce needs	Businesses are committed to Johnson County employment standards

The following is information that Lynette Jacoby reviewed for each of the three issue groups to help them in developing their action plans.

GIVENS

Households with children, and especially single-parented households, have the highest rates of poverty.

- Johnson County has a high cost of living compared to other areas of the state.
- 17.9% Johnson County residents live in poverty (*American Community Survey, US Census Bureau*)
40.3% Black, 28.6% Hispanic
- 70% of Iowa female headed households struggling economically (*Iowa Women's Foundation*)
- Iowa women earn 77% of what men earn when all factors are equal (*Iowa Women's Foundation*)

A low-wage job can't cover the cost of child care and other basic expenses.

- 66% Iowa jobs pay less than \$20/hr. (*US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016*)
- \$26/hour single parent of 2 needs to earn to make ends meet (*Iowa Policy Project, 2018*)
- \$16.17/hour 2 working parents of 2 needs to earn to make ends meet (*Iowa Policy Project, 2018*)
- 49% I.C. residents Asset-Limited Income Constrained Employed (*United Way ALICE report, 2016*)

Poverty is multi-generational.

- Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to be poor as adults
- Poverty is damaging to children's health and well-being
- The longer a child lives in poverty, the harder it is to graduate high school
- ICCSD has a 90.24% graduation rate, but children on free or reduced lunch (FRL) graduate at a rate of 81.29%. Clear Creek Amana's rate is 84.52%, with children on FRL at 69.77%. ([Iowa Dept. of Education](#))
- 36% youth in ICCSD on FRL (17/18) compared to 18% (02/03) (*Iowa City School District Enrollment Report*)

Quality affordable, accessible childcare is critical for individuals to achieve education and/or employment.

- 76% of Johnson County households with children under 6yrs have both parents working outside home ([CCR&R July 2018 Johnson](#))
- 22,168 children birth-12yrs Johnson County (*Iowa Women's Foundation*)
 - 9,267 childcare slots
 - 12,901 short fall
- 26% of Johnson County childcare businesses lost in past 5yrs. (*Iowa Women's Foundation*)
- 71% non-working poor with children under 5 years not working in order to take care of family ("*America's Work Problem*", *American Enterprise Institute, 2016*)

- 17,916 Iowa parents quit, did not take a job or greatly changed a job due to childcare (*Iowa Women's Foundation, 2016*)
- 12,778 Iowa women couldn't accept fulltime work due to childcare (*Iowa Women's Foundation 2017*)
- Childcare workers are making poverty wages and childcare staff turnover is high
- Hills, Lone Tree, and Oxford have 0 licensed childcare centers for children age 0-5. Oxford and Swisher have 0 registered child development homes. Hills and Tiffin each have only 1 registered child development home.

Childcare is often the highest monthly household expense, even more than housing

- Average weekly childcare rates in Johnson County are higher than the regional average ([CCR&R July 2018 Region](#))
- Johnson County average weekly childcare rates are higher than all other 19 counties in our region in every category for children age 0-5. Another county has higher rates in only before-and-after school care and full-time school-age care. ([CCR&R July 2018 Johnson](#))
- Weekly cost for an infant in a licensed center has increased 17% in the past 5 years, compared to a 2% increase for the state ([CCR&R July 2018 5 yr trend](#))

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is critical, but access is limited and the design is outdated.

- A low income threshold (145% FPL) and a large cliff effect for Childcare Assistance (*Iowa Policy Project*)
- Regionally, Johnson County has the lowest rate of child care programs that accept Child Care Assistance (50%) (*CCR&R*)
- The number of Johnson County programs reporting that they accept DHS Child Care Assistance has decreased 40% in the past 5 years. ([CCR&R July 2018 5 yr trend](#))
- The new, higher CCA reimbursement rate (as of January 1, 2019) is only about 70% of the market rate for center-based care in Johnson County and 80% of the rate for home-based care. ([CCR&R & DHS](#))
- NO providers in Johnson County provide evening/overnight care or weekend care and accept Child Care Assistance. ([DHS Child Care Client Portal 11/20/18](#))

A disconnect between available jobs and qualified workers.

- Jobs outnumber job seekers
- 2.3% unemployment rate in Southeast Iowa region (*Local Area Unemployment Statistics*)
- 68% of jobs in Iowa will require education and/or training beyond high school by 2025 (*Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*)
- Large gap in middle-skill workers – 54% of all jobs only 34% available workers (*2017 Occupational Employment Statics, Labor Market Information Division, Iowa Workforce Development, 2016 U.S. Census Bureau*)
- 91% all Iowa high school students graduate (*Iowa's Area Education Agency*)
- 39% Hispanic Iowans lack a high school diploma (*American Community Survey 2016 Estimates, 2016 Current Population Survey*)

- 17.7% African American Iowans lack a high school diploma (*American Community Survey 2016 Estimates, 2016 Current Population Survey*)
- 17.2% Asian Iowans lack a high school diploma (*American Community Survey 2016 Estimates, 2016 Current Population Survey*)
- Untapped labor pool: immigrants/refugees; ex-offenders; mothers with children in the home
- In Iowa since 1979, productivity gains (65.5%) have greatly outpaced workers' wages (9.3% median compensation) (*Iowa Policy Project*)

Housing

- 3,695 owner and 3,965 renter Johnson County households pay more than more than 30% of their monthly income for housing (*CHAS data, 2011-2015*)
- 1,900 owner and 7,355 renter Johnson County households pay more than 50% of their monthly income for housing (*CHAS data, 2011-2015*)
- Almost 17,000 households throughout Johnson County--30 percent of all households pay more than they can afford (*CHAS data, 2011-2015*)
- Half of all renters spend more than they can afford every month for their housing (*CHAS data, 2011-2015*)
- Working at minimum wage, a single head of household needs to work approximately 100 hours a week to afford a modest, market-rate two-bedroom apartment in Johnson County (*Out of Reach Iowa 2018*)
- A full-time worker needs to make \$18.38/hour in order to afford a modest, market-rate two bedroom apartment. The average renter makes \$9.25/hour (*Out of Reach Iowa 2018*)
- Only 1 in 10 Johnson County households that income qualify for Housing Choice Vouchers receives them, due to the limited number of vouchers available. Just under 1,300 vouchers are available. 13,000 households qualify for vouchers based on their income (*City of Iowa City, CHAS data 2011-2015*)
- 53% of the rental market in Iowa City/Coralville is occupied by UI students, almost 20% higher than the average "peer community." 34% average across 10 similar University communities(*Strategic Housing Master Plan, 2017*)

OTHER GIVENS

- Health insurance costs are high
- Transportation barriers- night/ weekend
- Part-time temp jobs- lack benefits
- Language barriers

This is a review of the Key Actions developed in each group: things that are unique to one area: Childcare, Income Employment & Education, or Housing

Childcare

Advocacy for parental leave

Early educator discounts at local business

Recognition of early childhood profession

Expand crisis childcare program

Expand safe families program

Expand part day pre-schools to full day programs

Expand and enhance sick child, evening and weekend programs

Partner with Kirkwood early childhood program

Teacher scholarships are available from the Association of Educators of Young Children Program

Incentivize programs to take Child Care Assistance funds

Incentivize ways to encourage providers to open centers

Partner with intergenerational resources and seniors to provide services

Cultural competency training for providers

Increase funding for head Start programs

Seek regional reimbursement rates for childcare assistance funds

Income, Employment, & Education

Identify J County employers with the highest staffing needs

Host a summit with ICA, Chamber, U of I work-force development, & business leaders, to communicate and collaborate

Develop and agreed upon definition of “employee first”

Develop education resources about the need for jobs in the trade unions

Housing

Engage landlords

Use public health “lens” for data and interventions (as well as other lenses)

Help support the Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition and utilize it as a frontline of advocacy

Make JCAHC a meaningful and action oriented experience

Improve homeowner resources

Increase diversity of housing units available

Expand inclusionary housing ordinances

Expand rental opportunities

Track the net housing units that are available

Identify the resources needed (eg.: the number of rental units needed)

Things that are common to all 3 issue areas:

Childcare

Outreach to large employers to support early childhood

Engage faith communities

Community awareness—messaging to different segments of the community

Transportation—options to improve accessibility

Community awareness—activities that raise awareness of early childhood issues and challenges

Specific business outreach—awareness not just large employers

Get buy-in—by asking for end users input

Get buy-in—by crafting concise messages

Improve wages using the AEYC programs that can help

Improve access by addressing transportation issues

Professional development for providers

Cost/benefit analysis—show the positive return on investing in child care

Tax incentives—for early childhood research and development

Collect data—about resources and needs and organize into a user-friendly format

Find out what other communities are doing to see if there are lesson to learn

Bring back—ideas that can be adapted and adopted in Johnson County

Income, Employment, & Education

Study poverty issues related to income, employment, and education in Johnson County

Research best practices in other communities

Develop an understanding of the different segments of the community affected

Identify resources and projects that might succeed

Do a cost benefit analysis that demonstrates there is a good return on investment

Meet with experts

Info-graphics on Norstrum and Frontier and their positive impact and efforts

Talk with employers about barriers to good wages and benefits

Seek and submit grants that can add resources to help foster and support programs

Conduct an assessment of transit needs to help people get to their employment and enhance regional transportation options

Develop an advocacy agenda and a sequence of steps that will be effective

Identify paths of influence

Develop community-wide talking points—same story/same voice

Meet with legislators, educators, and local government representatives about ways to change policies and practices

Use technology like Skype, Facebook and the like to share messages and help promote the plan

Housing

Apply pressure to policy makers

Set in motion powerful advocates and champions

Have a broad community education campaign

Apply pressure to the private sector

Use a common language for cohesive, concise messages

Identify model communities

Find private sector champions

Utilize the “Frameworks” training (this is a model for how to talk about and frame key issues)

Get funding for new housing options

City/county other leaders seek funding to support efforts

Organize a community wide strategic plan around this issue

Engage the community around the plan

Develop a list of specific success strategies including efforts that worked in other communities

Use a community-based participator research method that gets those affected by the issue to the table

Identify current projects underway in our community and around the state

For all of the groups—identify things they need to learn about; what help we need; and what our top priorities are

Things that have some overlap to other groups:

Childcare

Tax incentives

Increasing funds

Legislative advocacy

Income Employment and Education

Survey consumer and get feedback about what might help

Talk with employers

Create on-line resource list with links that can assess immigrants and refugees

Develop a pilot program for employers and business

Scale up existing programs

Housing

Move those “gatekeepers” who can overcome barriers

Develop a message the relates to “what’s init for me”

Use public health as a neutral facilitator

Develop a revolving fund to help license professional immigrants

In a review of the key actions I've categorized them in the following way and sorted them to fit one particular area:

Advocacy:

For childcare—parental leave, expanded crisis childcare, safe families program, part day to full day, funding for Head Start, regional re-imburement rates

For housing and all—find champions who can move the community, gatekeepers who can lower barriers, paths of influence

Apply pressure to various groups to change and strong work with legislators and elected officials

Partnering:

Childcare—Kirkwood childcare, Association of Educators of Young Children

Housing—Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition

For all—intergenerational resources to help, faith communities, Iowa Women's Foundation, cities/county/United Way, Chamber, ICAD, University of Iowa

Research & Study:

I.D. employers with highest needs for workers

Talk with employers about barriers for work/childcare/housing and what works

Track housing units and # of units needed

Cost/benefit analysis for all 3 issues

Data collection and a "Needs/Resources Map"

Find out about other communities and what is working around the state

Study how different segments of the community are affected or impacted by these issues

Do an assessment of transit needs—and how it impacts all 3 issues

I.D. current programs underway

Survey consumers about what would help and what is working

Community Awareness & Engagement:

Host a summit with the Chamber, ICAD, U of I, business, local government to converse about these issues (also try to get folks affected by poverty at this)

Agree on a definition of “employee first”

Find and use education resources to talk about the needs in trade unions

Engage landlords

Outreach to large and small employers about childcare, income, and housing

Developing community-wide talking points that are tailored to different segments and related to one or more of the three issue areas

Implement a broad community awareness campaign

Use common language for concise and clear message that can be understood by broad and diverse groups

Utilize the “Frameworks” training to help figure out the best way to frame messages about all 3 issue areas

New or Expanded Programs:

Early educator discounts by area businesses

Expand: crisis childcare, safe families, part day to full day, sick child, and weekend child care programs

Teacher scholarships for providers

New homeowner resources

Expand the number of housing units available

Provide or expand tax incentives to support various programs

Try pilot programs in 1 or more of the issue areas

Scale up existing programs

Training:

Cultural competency training for providers in each issue area

Professional development for providers

Utilize the “Frameworks” training to assist in crafting messages about these issues

Meet with various experts in each of the issue areas to get advice and learn

Develop an on-line resource list especially to assist new refugees and immigrants

Funding:

Seek and obtain funding for supporting this work

Also look for other non-financial resources that might support aspects of need that would assist efforts.

Following a meeting held on December 11th to coordinate the three action plans the group listed some key action steps for the coming months that were prioritized. They also developed a coordinated action plan with timeframes. At the meeting Lynette Jacoby and the members reviewed information about some of the efforts that are underway or in the works for the coming months that relate to various poverty issues. She also distributed a summary of two different focus groups that were conducted at the Coralville Food Pantry and the Center for Worker justice.

Existing efforts and things that might be in the works in the coming months

Childcare

Application for Iowa Womens Foundation childcare solutions grant

Complete childcare suitability study

Development of an incentive program for childcare centers & increasing and maintaining the number of state childcare assistance slots

Exploring public/private partnerships for expanding childcare slots and training of workers

Advocate for expanding childcare assistance eligibility (and reduce cliff effect—there is no gradual reduction of assistance, you have it and then it stops altogether)

Income, Education & Employment

Targeted transportation program (ie Frontier Coop & Willis Dady Homeless Shelter, Catherine McAuley Center)

Replicate Linn county opportunity center

Business mentorships/training

Affordable Housing

Implementation & expansion of “Rent Wise” strengthening partnerships with landlords

“Frameworks” training for affordable housing advocates

A business survey in Iowa City & Cedar Rapids on how housing impacts the work force (by the affordable housing coalition)

A look at inclusionary housing in the area

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Coralville Community Food Pantry

General Barriers/Challenges:

- Employment
 - Wages
 - Wages are too low—no one can live on \$8/hour
 - As a result, you have to work at least 2 jobs—but then you lose benefits for working too many hours
 - Benefits
 - Many of the jobs available at not full-time, do not include benefits like PTO, health care, childcare, etc.
- Social Security
 - Not able stretch benefits far enough
 - Penalized for working
- Housing
 - Rent too high
 - 2-3 year waiting list for Section 8 housing
 - Why not reach out to more landlords to get more on board with subsidies
 - One HUD unit dweller: worried that medical expenses will not count towards future eligibility/cost
 - Current eligibility
 - Coral Ridge Apartments – subsidized units are full

- Deposits too high, as well as application fees
- Lack of landlord upkeep on rentals = higher utility costs
- Credit checks hurt credit scores
- Low-income/working residents are valued less than University students
 - New housing always popping up for students, but not for long-term residents
- Transportation
 - Getting from North Liberty to anywhere is difficult
 - There are only 2 routes from Coralville to NL, (early morning, late afternoon)
 - Express bus only runs M-F—weekend buses needed
 - Discounted fares only apply during off peak hours
 - One individual was stranded after a late appointment at IRL UIHC—had to walk 1.8 miles in cold to get home (65+ years old)
 - No Saturday evening or Sunday bus service –one individual indicated that his son works in a restaurant in Iowa City. Has difficulties getting to and from work on weekends.
- Child care
 - Cost > earnings
 - Few daycare providers accept state childcare assistance
 - It takes up to a month for DHS to process childcare assistance applications and some employers are not willing to wait that long.
 - Grandparents who take care of kids are struggling financially
 - Lack an ability to get back into the job market

Barriers to Employment

- Benefits not available, or if so, they're not available right away
- Transportation
- Employers hesitant to hire people with “interruptions” in employment
- Not worth it for such low wages

Recommendations

- More incentives for landlords to take subsidies while also maintaining **quality** units
- Community rider input for bus routes/transportation
 - Establish citizen committees
- Change eligibility for SS benefits
- Connect county healthcare navigator with social services like pantries
- Establish bus services to specific job sites—especially after hours, weekends
- Build more affordable (and high quality) housing options in Coralville
- More opportunities to learn the system—guidance, help navigating various services
- Services/help available in multiple languages
- Job training programs

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Center for Worker Justice

General Barriers/Challenges:

- Employment
 - Employers give preferential work to their own children
 - Employers bring in new people they know
 - Immigration status is a huge issue
 - Figuring out taxes is difficult
 - Medical insurance is tied to hours worked
 - Can't find another job or boss won't hire you back the next spring
 - Work ends, but social security causes headaches
 - Undocumented status makes it difficult to work and fear working
 - Construction jobs are seasonal – hours reduced other places
 - Get hired for more work, but don't get hours scheduled
 - Students leave and work hours are reduced
 - Things that would give skills (like doing hair) are out of reach
 - Certification and training from one country may not be transferrable to USA
 - a doctor in Sudan can't practice here
- Education/Training
 - School is expensive
 - Immigration status presents problems
 - Language barriers
 - Youth are bilingual, but lack math skills and can't afford tutors
 - Kids can't participate in music, need immigration status to rent from West Music
 - Computer skills = barrier for kids, but especially parents
 - Childcare
 - Schools should link workers to employers with jobs
- Housing
 - No insulation, high utility bills
 - Trailer homes are old and rotting
- Other
 - Winter clothes are expensive
 - Have to support families back in old country
 - Prescriptions are expensive and Free Medical Clinic can't handle everything
 - understaffed
- Recommendations/Solutions
 - Workshops and trainings where legal status is not an issue
 - Increased availability of childcare
 - More English classes
 - Expand Farmer's Market – wait list very long to be a vendor

Coordinated Action Plan for the Coming Year With Priorities

Action Step	Lead person	Date
Provide the “Frameworks” training	Sara Barron	May
Improve intergovernmental collaboration (like the Access Center)	Meghann Foster	May/ June
Find a community champion to help develop “employee first” model	Lynette Jacoby	April
Conduct a transit study and ensure that marginalized voices are included and engaged	Sofia Mehaffey Nalo Johnson	Summer/ Fall
Do resource mapping for childcare as well as affordable housing (where is the need greatest)	Mara Cheney	March
Expand the school-based preschools and expand them from part-day to full-day	Laurie Nash	Fall
Survey childcare providers—including why aren’t they accepting childcare assistance funds	Laurie Nash Susan Gray	April
Ask the League of Women Voters to sponsor a forum on poverty	Maeve Clark	January
Conduct a childcare suitability study	Laurie Nash	Summer
Craft tailor made messages (all issue areas) & prioritize them after the “Frameworks” training is complete	Sara Barron	Parking lot
Do a cost/benefit analysis to show return on investment for spending on programs (with help from an urban planning intern)	Nalo Johnson Mara Cheney	Fall
Explore a local option sales tax—or a less regressive hotel/motel tax to help pay for programs	Nalo Johnson Meghann Foster Sara Barron	Summer
Promote community awareness—with events at least every quarter	Lynette Jacoby Maeve Clark	Jan/Apr June/Oct
Conduct a poverty simulation—perhaps with help from the Chamber’s leadership class	Kaila Rome	Fall
Present the legislative priorities the group would like to see the Board of Supervisors address with the state	Lynette Jacoby	January

Legislative Priorities Suggested by the group for the Board of Supervisors:

Minimum wage—at least to get the state to allow local control

Base childcare reimbursement rates on local/regional data rather than state

Modify garnishment of state payments guidelines

Reduce the “cliff” effect on childcare assistance and SNAP

Improve wage theft laws & predatory lending; also address how some employees are assessed fees just to collect their paychecks

I believe the group is confident that this plan can be implemented in the coming year. They also agreed to participate in a mid-year meeting convened to make adjustments to the plan and review new information that might impact its success. I will attend the meeting of the Board of Supervisors on January 9th with Lynette Jacoby to present this report and answer any questions the board members might have.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to assist the board and Lynette in developing a meaningful action plan to address some of the key issues affecting persons in our community who are experiencing poverty and some of the challenges they face.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Jim Swaim

Facilitator