



# Missourians to End Poverty

*Bringing the Community Together to End Poverty*

Food    Health    Education    Energy & Housing    Family & Economic Security

www.communityaction.org

Who are the

*Missourians to  
End Poverty?*

AmerenUE

Beyond Housing- St. Louis

Cafe Via Roma

Catholic Charities  
Archdiocese of St. Louis

Catholic Charities of Kansas  
City - St. Joseph, Inc.

Citizens for Missouri's  
Children

Community Action Agency of  
St. Louis County

Community Action Partner-  
ship of Greater St. Joseph

Community Awareness and  
Resource Exchange (CARE)

Social Concerns Office -  
Diocese of Jefferson City

Eileen Wallace Consulting

Faith Beyond Walls

Gardner Capital, Inc.

Green Hills Community Action  
Agency

Health Care Foundation of  
Greater Kansas City

Kansas City Power and Light

Laclede Gas Company

Lutheran Family & Children's  
Services of Missouri

Madsen & Wright  
Governmental Consultants

## Housing & Energy Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas with communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

Affordable, healthy and energy efficient housing is the essential foundation needed for Missouri families to survive and thrive. To prevent the crisis of poverty for families with limited resources, we must address the housing situation in Missouri. In order to protect our future, we need to ensure that homes for Missouri's most vulnerable citizens, our children, are affordable, healthy, and safe.

One out of every three people living in severely substandard housing is a child. In 2009, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released a report called "Healthy Homes", which found that substandard housing contributes significantly to the health issues faced by many low income children. While the effects on children from lead poisoning, chronic carbon monoxide poisoning (low-level), and asthma have been proven to impact a child's ability to learn and perform in school... another important element in this debate is the economic impact.

The estimated cost nationwide for lead poisoning related issues alone is over \$44 billion. Take into account the lost work productivity for parents of sick children, the lost learning which impacts the overall earning potential of the children involved, and the increased expenditure for special education and medical expenses and the impact on the economy becomes enormous. For help with lead and environmental issues see: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-smgrants.html>

### Energy

Low income households pay an average of 46% of their gross pay toward two expenses, housing and energy. A household is considered "cost burdened" if they pay more than 30% of their income toward housing and prior to the current economic crisis, 40% of renting households and 20% of homeowner households fell into this category. In addition to a lack of affordable, safe housing, the rising cost of energy has created even more of burden for low income families.

The average expenditure for energy in low-income households is nearly \$1,673 annually. Low income families must often cut back on other necessities, such as food or health care to pay their energy bills. (US Department of Energy) Most families bear an energy burden of 3-6% of their income, yet low-income households often must pay 16% or more of their household income towards energy expenses.

A record number of households are applying for help to pay home heating bills through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, with 17 states, including Missouri, reporting that requests for applications are up by 20% from 2009.

Missourians to End Poverty continued...

Missouri Association for Community Action

Missouri Association for Social Welfare

Missouri Budget Project

Missouri Career Center

Missouri Department of Mental Health

Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division

Missouri Family Health Council

Missouri Food Bank Association

Missouri Gas Energy

Missouri Head Start Association

Missouri Head Start Collaboration Office

Missouri Health Alliance

Missouri IMPACT

Missouri Kidney Program

Missouri National Education Association

Missouri Public Service Commission

Northwest Workforce Investment Board

Ozarks Food Harvest

Partnership for Children

Primaris/CLAIM

Ready Aim Advocate!

Salvation Army

Treasures

United Services Community Action Agency

United Way of Central Missouri

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency

## Affordable Housing

In Missouri, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$646. To afford this two-bedroom apartment, a person must earn \$12.43 per hour. However, the estimated average wage for a renter in this state is \$11.85 an hour. Therefore, a renter must work 42 hours a week, for 52 weeks per year. (National Low Income Housing Coalition)

### Public Policy Action Strategies

- Support low income Housing Tax Credits, which provide a resource for many organizations to use in the development of new housing as well as the renovation of homes for low income families. In addition, take steps to ensure that a significant number of these credits go to non-profit development projects. Making such modifications will promote long term sustainable low-income housing since not for profit organizations have no vested interest in converting units to the market rate. (Many developments are converted to market rate after 15 years, thereby decreasing the number of units available to low and moderate income households.)
- Develop a housing code enforcement program to ensure that rental units in Missouri are safe, healthy, and in compliance with local and state building codes.
- Develop energy efficiency housing codes (legislation), which would address long term energy efficiency in new housing.
- Increase funding for Weatherization Assistance Program(WAP). This program alleviates the heavy energy burden on low-income households and helps them become self-sufficient. **Weatherization:**
  - Reduces a household's annual gas heating consumption by 32%
  - Creates an average energy savings of \$358 per year
  - Improves health and safety by eliminating energy-related hazards
  - Weatherization returns \$1.53 in energy-related benefits for every dollar invested in the program and leverages \$1.54 in other federal, state, utility and private resources
- Provide housing assistance for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as they transition from welfare to work to keep the housing costs affordable and enabling them to live closer to better employment opportunities.
- Increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Program (LIHEAP). This program provides much needed funds that can be used by low income families to meet many types of energy assistance needs, reducing the energy burden these families face. LIHEAP also aids in keeping low income children and elderly safe in extreme summer and winter weather.
- Prevent the "hidden homeless" by providing funds for housing vouchers. Nationally, 53% of the household that receive vouchers are families with children. When housing costs cannot be covered in the budget, families are moving and doubling up with friends or other family members.
- Invest in affordable housing initiatives to prevent the cost associated with foster care. The average annual cost to place the children of one family in foster care is \$47,600 annually. The average cost of permanent housing with supportive services for a family for one year is a fraction of that amount.
- Develop a source of funds for new and rehabilitated housing to provide for healthier living conditions for children and their parents. Studies show that children who have secure, affordable housing are far more likely to stay in school and succeed socially. Their parents are far more likely to keep their jobs and maintain family income.