



National Center for Children in Poverty
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For Immediate Release

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Researchers: Far Above Minimum Wage, LA Families Still Struggling *NCCP Fights Poverty with Customized Reports for All 64 Parishes*

New York City – New research has shown that across Louisiana, families need well above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 in order to make ends meet.

The basic cost of living for a family of four in Orleans Parish is \$44,184 annually. This budget includes only the most basic living expenses such as rent, food, child care, health insurance, out-of-pocket medical needs, transportation, and taxes. Still, it translates to both parents working full-time at \$11 per hour. In Jefferson Parish, a family of four needs \$50,242, or \$12 per hour, per parent, while in Acadia Parish, the same family needs to earn \$36,310, or \$9 per hour, per parent. And single parents must earn far higher wages to provide for themselves and their children.

Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) has used interactive data tools to generate customized information on family budgets for several Louisiana parishes since 2007. This year, NCCP researchers collaborated with the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to update and expand existing data tools. The collaboration has made it possible to create custom results for each of Louisiana's 64 parishes.

"The Picard Center is excited about partnering with NCCP to give Louisiana's policymakers the tools and knowledge they need to support legislation that will lead to getting families out of poverty. This partnership also supports other initiatives in the state, such as the Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council, which is charged with reducing child poverty by 50 percent in the next 10 years," says Billy R. Stokes, Executive Director of the Picard Center.

One tool, the Basic Needs Budget Calculator, shows how much different families need to cover the cost of basic living expenses. Another, the Family Resource Simulator, shows the impact of various work supports – such as food stamps (now SNAP), child care assistance, public health insurance, and tax credits – on families' ability to make ends meet. Estimates are based on comprehensive, parish-specific data on the cost of living in Louisiana, combined with up-to-date information about the impact of tax and benefit policies in the state.

"We are very pleased that the Picard Center has helped us to expand our work in Louisiana, and we hope that this customized information will be useful in understanding and addressing the challenges families face throughout the state," states Jessica Purmort, lead NCCP researcher on the project.

“By providing accurate information about families’ needs and how work supports help, we hope to support informed decision-making among policymakers and advocates seeking to achieve positive change for Louisiana’s families,” notes Kinsey Alden Dinan, a senior policy associate at NCCP.

The Basic Needs Budget Calculator can be found at www.nccp.org/tools/budget, and the Family Resource Simulator can be found at <http://www.nccp.org/tools/frs/>. The online tools provide data for select parishes across the state; for more information on parishes not featured online, contact Jessica Purmort (purmort@nccp.org).

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is the nation’s leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America’s low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.