



Ensuring Opportunity: The Campaign to Cut Poverty in Contra Costa County

Thursday, October 16, 2014
Pleasant Hill Community Center

Notes from the Six Focus Area Discussions

A summary of the highlights from these sessions is available at www.cutpovertycc.org. These notes are the “verbatim” comments made by participants at the convening, edited and organized in categories.

- Economic Security
- Education
- Food Security
- Health Security
- Housing Security
- Safety

Notes Edited and Organized by:

Solomon Belette and Jasmine Tarkoff, Members of the Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition
Fran Biderman, Family Economic Security Partnership, First 5 Contra Costa

A special thanks to all of the facilitators of these six Focus Area discussions!

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ECONOMIC SECURITY FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Nancy Williams	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition
Terrance Cheung	Supervisor John Gioia's Office

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE
- ❖ JOB DEVELOPMENT/ READINESS STRATEGIES
- ❖ ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS & CONSTITUENCIES
- ❖ RESEARCH & COLLABORATION

INCREASE THE MINIMUM WAGE (IMW)

- Rally behind the effort to increase the minimum wage by forming a strong and diverse coalition of supporters
- There is unanimity among major faith traditions that workers be paid a living wage. Use these commitments to mobilize the faith communities
- Education to help people understand the economics of minimum wage
- Adopt prevailing wage strategy in the county
- Government entities have a responsibility to lead by example – pay living wages
- Start with the county; adoption of a county minimum wage could have a big impact - large population in poverty lives in unincorporated areas
- Be mindful of business makeup in each city – understand potential opposition (e.g., if city tax base is dependent on many chain stores may need a different strategy than if lots of small business owners)

- Target public agencies first for minimum wage increase (research San Mateo county's approach)
- Recognize that US corporations are sitting on more than \$1 Trillion in cash they can voluntarily raise pay any time they want
- Ask candidates to publically support increase to minimum wage

IMW – SPECIFIC POLICY/LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES

- Tie minimum wage to the cost of living
- Index minimum wage to inflation
- Couple the minimum wage with education/experience of workers
- Tie the minimum wage to incentives so that if you become more capable you get a higher minimum wage. Raise skills not just minimum wage
- Offer tax or other incentives so there is something in it for businesses
- Advocate to bring more major businesses to Contra Costa County

JOB DEVELOPMENT/READINESS STRATEGIES

- Don't put all focus on Minimum Wage – Develop strategies to complement (e.g., training that will be a magnet to economic development)
- Invest in programs to get workers employment ready and seen by employers as having additional value
- Keep training adults for higher skill level jobs that pay more
- Grow economy with middle wage jobs and build career pathways into these jobs (job training, education, etc.)
- Advocate to bring more major businesses to Contra Costa County
- Local governments must take high road and approve projects that come with good jobs
- Need Business Development to attract higher paying jobs to the county
- Look at supply chain of major industries in CCC and prepare workers to fill those positions.
- Add SparkPoint in Central County
- Talk to recruitment agencies to see what are the major work areas
- Look at dominant industry sectors in county and seek their support
- Adopt Community Benefit Agreements strategy
- Stipend programs for youth versus 1st time jobs – it's an idea
- Pay the “no experience – little experience” worker but they perform community services; they learn to build partnerships, give back and at the end get a grant for education.
- \$17,000/year plus \$5,000 grant (\$17k/year is what youth can live on, plus \$300 living/rent stipend)

ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CONSTITUENTS

- Need to involve residents as stakeholders
- Get buy-in from employers; (concern: employers will cut employees hours and/or raise prices to compensate for higher minimum wage)
- Find employers who support increase to minimum wage to lead in the campaign
- Involve Chambers of Commerce and Workforce Development Board
- Create a movement building strategy for residents most affected by poverty
- Understand the needs of different constituencies;
 - Working poor
 - Under employed
 - Businesses owners – small businesses
 - Corporations
 - Chains

RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION

- Benchmark San Francisco and Oakland's campaigns before proposing a ballot measure for Contra Costa County
 - Research the impact on other wages as a result of passing minimum wage increases in SF, Seattle, others...
 - Talk to Economic Prosperity Working Group about strategies they are using in the Bay Area
 - Link up with greater Bay Area groups working on minimum wage, including EBASE, ROC, Lift-up Oakland
 - Learn from the Fast Food workers campaign to raise wages to \$15/hr
 - Contact UC Berkeley Labor Center – advised on Oakland Measure FF – and Y&H Soda Foundation to fund economic impact study in Contra Costa County
 - Complete some CCC research, like focus groups, to see what resonates with CCC residents
 - Understand the effects of increased minimum wage on workers eligibility for safety net benefits to avoid unintended consequence of loss of benefits and lower overall income
 - Understand what we need in addition to minimum wage to move people out of poverty – don't make it the "silver bullet"
 - Proponents of early education in Oakland/Alameda County are lobbying to study the impact of increased minimum wage on the childcare community
 - Ask Multi-faith ACTION Coalition to research other models for increasing minimum wages
 - Research Marin's "Living Wage in my Home" (asks individuals who have gardeners, housekeepers and other home workers to pay them a living wage of \$xx/hr.)
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EDUCATION FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Roger Lamm	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition
Jasmine Tarkoff	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition
Keith Archuleta	East Bay Leadership Council

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Funding
- ❖ Parental involvement and engagement
- ❖ Job preparation, career options, opportunities
- ❖ School Readiness & barriers to success
- ❖ Comprehensive, county-wide assistance/support
- ❖ Fair, equitable compensation for educators
- ❖ Reforming schools and the educational system
- ❖ Engagement of stakeholders and constituencies

FUNDING

- Early Education Funding
- Problems of perception and of funding
- For kids and for parents
- Untapped funds due to lack of space
- Use interfaith facilities
- Unequal funding for schools
- Wealthy areas get more support

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- Parental education at all levels
- Overworked parents
- Cultural shifts within families to encourage education
- Educating parents to be engaged
- Stimulate speaking, reading, singing by parents
- Learn decision making

JOB PREPARATION, CAREER OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Lack of real world education
- Resume writing
- Applications
- Letter writing
- Training for a strength based approach
- Not just educational achievements, like Germany
- Training for high skill jobs that have a future
- Educational connectivity
- Promote job shadowing
- Present alternatives to military for educational support
- Create options and awareness of alternative options
- Develop mentoring
- Develop work-ready/essential skills
- Develop pathways in life skills with fundamentals tied to jobs
- Reintroduce OWE (Outside Work Education) = paid traineeships in companies

SCHOOL READINESS AND OTHER BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

- Truancy = Motivation
- Truancy leads to dropouts
- Requires parental support
- Due to some students not academically ready for High School
- Inadequate literacy
- School does not seem relevant
- Use Kahn Academy to encourage self-teaching in areas of interest
- Literacy in English and Math
- Application deadlines discourage students who have not been informed or planned well

COMPREHENSIVE, COUNTYWIDE ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

- Childcare
- CalWORKS

FAIR AND EQUITABLE WAGES AND COMPENSATION FOR EDUCATORS

- Pay levels for pre-school teachers
- Livable wage jobs

REFORMING SCHOOLS AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- Focus on all schools, not just the failed ones
- Don't only have Saber Tooth curriculum (that is teaching old subjects which do not interest students)
- Don't only have Cyber Tooth Curriculum (That is just focusing on computer skills)

- Need many more volunteers in all schools
- Promote best practices
- Antioch is a commuter community/ Need activities from 3 to 7 pm for youth
- Provide much greater resources about what is available in education and job alternatives
- Redefine education
- Priorities by age group
 - Early education
 - After school
 - Teens
 - Parents
- Change community perceptions of educational problems and needs
- Provide much more educational guidance in schools
- Provide full services community schools programs that include parents
- Bring knowledge of opportunities in to school and churches
- Have more politically mandated learning like coding
- Provide transportation to and from training
- Use metrics for decision making
- Teach reading and writing at higher levels
- Attach Colleges to high schools rather than the reverse

ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CONSTITUENCIES

- Youth should be at our table during these discussions
- Get help from businesses and law enforcement personnel
- Develop community partnerships

CROSS-FOCUS IDEAS

- Job readiness, career options and opportunities - Economic Security
- Fair and Equitable Compensation for Educators - Economic Security

FOOD SECURITY FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Caitlin Sly	Food Bank
Judith Moore	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ COORDINATION OF SERVICES
- ❖ HEALTHY EATING
- ❖ FOOD ACCESS
- ❖ MEDIA/PUBLIC AWARENESS/DEBUNK MYTHS

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

- Food System Alliance → needs assessment
- Partner with other agencies to look at other needs of clients that come to get food
- Coordinate other services
 - Housing
 - Job training
 - Education

- MYLINC.org → list of services in Contra Costa
- Service Point → partner with Anka to get clients into referral system
- Meals on Wheels is receiving funds for SNAP to do nutrition education with seniors yet need connection with CalFresh → how many seniors who are eligible are not enrolled??
- Train St. Vincent de Paul workers to pre-screen for CalFresh

HEALTHY EATING

- Health and intersection with CalFresh
- Health education as part of CalFresh outreach

FOOD ACCESS

- The Lemon Lady → gleaning as a way of getting more fresh produce into system
- TheUrbanFarmers.org—gleaning
- The White Pony Express—food rescue
- Community gardens—garden education masters gardeners
- Food access & transportation

MEDIA/PUBLIC AWARENESS

- Debunk myths around CalFresh
- Teach clients to advocate for themselves
- Explain to clients how economic activity impacts society—immediately
- Need media component—targeted ads for specific populations

CalFresh Facts & Myths

- To get trained in CalFresh eligibility: Heidi Kleiner (food bank) hkleiner@foodbankccs.org, (925) 676-7543
- Food Security Task Force → meets 3rd Thursday @ 7:00PM at Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill.

HEALTH SECURITY FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Wanda Session	Health Services
Marianne Balin	Kaiser Permanente
April Wise	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ INSURING THE UNINSURED
- ❖ ENROLLMENT IN COVERED CALIFORNIA
- ❖ COORDINATION AND CONNECTION TO SERVICES
- ❖ POLICY ISSUES

INSURING THE UNINSURED

- Wanda and Marianne spoke about the campaign by Bill Walker to get all the uninsured in the county insured. The goal is 100% covered. The effort is to “create a climate of coverage”.
- Healthy Richmond (healthyrichmond.net) has a healthcare access group, among other things with 15 partners.

ENROLLMENT IN COVERED CALIFORNIA

- Healthy Richmond (healthyrichmond.net) has a healthcare access group, among other things with 15 partners. They are holding an enrollment event on Nov. 15th, with the goal of getting people enrolled in healthcare, particularly those eligible for Medi-Cal and Covered California. One suggestion was to combine CalFresh enrollment at that event.
- There is enrollment training on Oct. 25th at the Richmond library. Other trainings will be held and possibly special trainings if a group of volunteers (such as Multi-Faith) want to be involved.

COORDINATION AND CONNECTION TO SERVICES

- It was a great chance to hear about programs already in place by people involved in The Ensuring Opportunity – Campaign to Eliminate Poverty. These included, but not limited to Rubicon, Healthy Richmond, Meals on Wheels, FERST, First Five, the county, Kaiser, John Muir, and many more who were attending other task groups.
- The next goal after enrollment is getting people connected to care and educating them on how to navigate health insurance. Trainings for this will be needed as well. The final effort on that front will be connecting uninsured with programs such as RotaCare programs or the mobile health unit.
- California's Coordinated Care Initiative is another opportunity for partnering. Meals on Wheels is part of a coordinated hospital to home care; under MediConnect, a plan care coordinator gets the patient transportation, coverage for prescriptions, meals, etc.
- Possibilities for Multi-Faith Coalition to be involved include assisting in enrollment events, assisting in education of access to healthcare, support for existing programs (ex. RotaCare).

POLICY ISSUES

- Political measures suggested for support include Prop 45 and Laura's Law, both concerning healthcare.
 - Suggestions were made to support the county in expanding behavioral health community based services.
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HOUSING SECURITY FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Teri House	Council on Homelessness
Doug Leich	Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Solution to homelessness:**
 - ❖ PREVENTION
 - ❖ PROVIDE HOUSING TO THOSE WHO HAVE BECOME HOMELESS
 - ❖ SUPPORT SERVICES
 - ❖ DEVELOPEMNT OF HOUSING THAT IS AFFORDABLE

PREVENTION

- Homelessness contrary to American ideal of self-sufficiency
- We have the resources to solve homelessness, but lack the political will
- Need rethinking of how we provide housing for the poor; need to put pressure on elected officials
- Substantial savings realized from reduced Emergency Room and incarceration costs, plus other savings – may be enough to pay for the cost of housing provided
 - Providing housing reduces trauma and costs to society
 - \$18,500/yr per homeless person for average of 5 Emergency Room visits per year
 - Homeless 11 times more likely to go to prison than general population

- HUD, nonprofit providers and County Government - need to bring Health Care and Law Enforcement to the table

PROVIDE HOUSING TO THOSE WHO HAVE BECOME HOMELESS

- Housing First – an approach that was first implemented as a concept in Contra Costa County in 2004. More complete adoption of this approach can lead - to significant reduction in chronic homelessness for persons with high needs (severe acuity)
- Put homeless into housing as quickly as possible without mandated therapy or services compliance
- King County, WA example; other successes
- Utah Housing-First goal to end homelessness by 2016
- Rapid Rehousing quickly gets people off the street and is generally designed for the non-chronically homeless with moderate needs (moderate acuity)
- Nationwide “100 Thousand Homes Campaign” ended in June by successfully placing homeless people in 105,000 homes nationwide. Next nationwide initiative is “Zero: 2016” campaign; Contra Costa County has applied to participate

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Provide supportive services
 - Including money management services
- Reentry of incarcerated individuals is an issue
- Project Homeless Connect – best place to reach homeless in Contra Costa County
- Informal safety net of faith organizations
 - Harness this to take folks in
- Mental health issues are among the most important
- There has been good integration lately among mental health, homeless and other services
 - E.g. program for “serial inebriates”, including money management
- Public housing – people get kicked out for mental health and other behavioral issues; some have no income – still need services
- Master lease by nonprofit; sublease by tenant
- Self-help repair program
 - Help keep costs down
 - Develop job skills
- Rubicon program on landscaping
 - Problem: sporadic funding
- Transportation issues
 - Access to jobs
 - Transportation as a community health issue: excessive time commuting results in lack of time for community involvement

DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING THAT IS AFFORDABLE

- Tiny Houses – one way to provide low-cost housing that is affordable to those with very low incomes. \$3K - \$5 to build (not sure of exact amount; may be more than this)
- Village environment
- Need to find land to build them on
- Concord Naval Weapons Station

- Accommodation for the homeless required by law
 - Important distinction between “affordable housing” (for people with incomes of \$40K and up) and housing that is affordable to the lowest income population
 - Need about 700 units of housing that is affordable to the homeless population in Contra Costa County
 - HUD HOME funds, administered by Contra Costa County – grants to develop affordable housing
 - Need about \$20M to provide housing for the homeless in Contra Costa
 - If we need 700 units, consider proposing adding 100 units/year – need to get started!
 - Any attention paid to rent control in Contra Costa County?
 - No but there is attention paid to homeless prevention
 - Rent control – slowly squeezes housing out
 - Ellis Act provides landlords with a way out of rent control restrictions
 - Public housing
 - 98% occupancy rate in most of CCC
 - Only about 50% occupancy rate in North Richmond due to damage
 - Housing Authority funding has declined every year since 1990’s
 - People are doubling up; living in garages
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SAFETY FOCUS GROUP

Facilitators:

Rebekah Truemper
Elizabeth Wilmerding

STAND!
West Contra Costa Family Justice Center

CATEGORIES OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ SERVICE AND RESOURCE NEEDS
- ❖ PREVENTION STRATEGIES

SERVICES AND RESOURCES NEEDED

Poverty is the only demographic characteristic that has been proven to correlate with domestic and intimate partner violence. One reason for this may be that conflict over resources has everything to do with control, which itself is of course is at the heart of intimate partner violence.

Research has shown that two factors need to be present for intimate partner violence to occur with regularity in a culture: the first is an existing culture of violence, where violence is a typical response to conflict; the second is an element of male superiority. There are many contributors to these two factors, but a key cause of male superiority is the financial disempowerment of women.

If we can address the rampant and extreme poverty in our society, we will certainly see rates of domestic and intimate partner violence decrease.

- Shortages of:
 - Emergency housing
 - Affordable child care (trauma informed!)
- We can ID families, but the challenge is to connect with them and get them help.
- Policies to support staff who are working with families exposed to DV and experience violence themselves
- We need to understand trauma.
- Certain systems are “required” for DV/violence survivors: CFS, courts, etc.; how do we help these systems support these families?

- Workplace protections for DV survivors.
- Generational cycle of violence – need to try and break this
- Victims have many barriers: language, immigration status, previous victimization/trauma.
- Perpetrators are victims of larger systemic issues

Individuals who perpetrate violence do so for a wide variety of reasons. If we can prevent would-be perpetrators from being traumatized themselves, from dropping out of school, from falling into poverty and from abusing substances, we can help stop the cycle of violence. We owe it to the perpetrators as well as the victims.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- Violence prevention starts early! When kids feel safe, they go to school, they are educated, and they can provide for themselves as adults.
- Better access to services by trauma-informed staff will increase self-sufficiency.
- Prevention and support in school (re: violence) will prevent poverty
- If school is a safe place, kids are much more likely to continue to attend and to graduate successfully. By preventing bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and dating violence from being accepted in our schools, we can ensure that all young people get the education they need to be on a path towards financial empowerment.
- We can be trauma informed, keep having conversations, and engage men in prevention.