

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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## Institute: Federal poverty levels are wrong

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**DENVER** - A single parent raising two small children in Pueblo must earn twice the federal poverty line to be self-sufficient without government aid, according to a report released Wednesday.

The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute held a news conference outside the State Capitol to release the "Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado: A Family Needs Budget" report, written by Diana Pearce of the University of Washington School of Social Work in Seattle.

"Self-sufficiency is 2-3 times the poverty level, depending on where you live and what type of family you have," Pearce said.

"What the standard tells us is that lower-wage jobs alone, even those well above the minimum wage or the official poverty level, simply do not allow families to meet their needs, even at a minimally adequate level," the report's author said.

Posada and other advocates for low-income women have scheduled a public hearing on federal welfare reform reauthorization for Nov. 3 at Pueblo Community College.

Colorado's congressional delegation will be invited to hear first-hand stories from advocates and families affected by the 1996 reform law that mandates a transition from welfare to work.

The Pearce report said the federal poverty line is \$14,630 a year.

Yet, the report recommended \$33,863 for a parent with one infant and one preschooler to live in Pueblo, \$41,202 to live in higher-cost Denver and between \$26,000 and \$29,000 to live in more rural areas such as Alamosa and Otero counties.

A typical parent with two small children in Pueblo must earn \$16.03 an hour to cover housing, food, clothing, transportation, child care and other costs of living, according to the report.

A Pueblo family with both parents and two small children at home needs the father and mother

both to earn \$9.25 an hour to reach the report's recommended \$39,062 a year.

Two Democratic legislators - Reps. Andrew Romanoff of Denver and Betty Boyd of Lakewood - spoke at the news conference in support of state action to help low-income families. They did not offer any immediate legislative solutions, however, probably because the welfare reform law's reauthorization is up to Congress next year.