

## Study figures self-sufficiency

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A single Boulder parent with an infant and a preschooler must earn more than three and a half times the federal poverty threshold to be self-sufficient in the city, according to a statewide study issued Wednesday.

That parent must earn \$23.68 an hour, or \$50,006 a year, to pay for housing, child care, food, transportation and other costs of living in the city. That compares with the federal poverty threshold of \$13,874, according to U.S. Census statistics for 2000.

A single Boulder County parent with an infant and a preschooler must earn almost three and a half times the federal poverty threshold to be self-sufficient in the county, according to a statewide study issued Wednesday.

That parent must earn \$22.92 an hour, or \$48,403 a year, to pay for housing, child care, food, transportation and other costs of living in Boulder County outside the city of Boulder. That compares with the federal poverty threshold of \$13,874, according to U.S. Census statistics for 2000.

The Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute released a study examining how much money working families must earn to survive in the state's 63 counties. The so-called "self-sufficiency standard" is calculated using federal, state and local statistics on the cost of basic needs.

"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," said Diana Pearce in a prepared statement. Pearce is a University of Washington sociologist who conducted the study.

The study concludes that families earning enough to disqualify them from welfare still can't meet their families' needs. It notes that earning the minimum wage of \$5.25 an hour with benefits and tax credits considered, an adult would make about \$14,543 annually.

City of Boulder adults need to earn between \$20,334 annually for a single person to \$66,616 for a single parent with three children. Two parents with an infant and a preschooler would have to earn a total of \$55,090 a year, the study says. The 2000 census indicated Boulder had 5,776 married couples with children younger than 18, 1,678 single moms and 576 single dads.

The situation is slightly better in the rest of the county, with a single person needing a \$19,078 annual income to get by and a single parent with three children requiring \$63,911. Two parents with an infant and a preschooler would require \$53,606. In 2000, Boulder County outside the city of Boulder had 25,484 married families with children, 4,181 single moms and 1,596 single dads. Most of the expenses are attributable to housing and childcare expenses.

Susanne Roser, director of Project Self Sufficiency for Boulder County, said the numbers accurately reflect what she sees as she tries to help welfare recipients get out on their own and work to support themselves and their children.

"In the low range, it's paying from \$10 to \$18 or \$19" an hour, Roser said. "Our families find it very difficult. They tend to move out of the city after becoming self-sufficient because they have to."

Boulder County and the city of Boulder aren't the most expensive in the study. A single Pitkin County parent of three would need to earn \$76,304. In Douglas County, the amount would be \$74,435; in Eagle County, \$66,195; in Summit County, \$64,865; Jefferson County, \$64,475 and in San Miguel, \$64,319.

The least expensive counties for the same family is Custer at \$34,314. The annual salaries required in Conejos, Crowley, Dolores, San Juan and Yuma counties all are less than \$36,000.