

Women Employed Issues Important Study *Shows Single Cicero Families Need \$18.60 an Hour to Make Ends Meet*

In an important study released by Women Employed, there is a major disparity between the official Federal Poverty Level guideline and the reality of how much a family in Illinois in general, and Cicero in particular, needs to earn to make ends meet. The study was written by Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington as part of the national Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project, and developed by Wider Opportunities for Women based in Washington, D.C. The study is based on sources from federal and state statistical information.

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Cicero...

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single-parent family with an infant and a pre-school child needs to earn at least \$18.60 an hour, or \$39,293 a year, just to make ends meet in the town of Cicero. In Cicero, a wage earner in a family of one adult and an infant and pre-school child need to earn \$3,274 a month to live rather than the \$1,219 a month (\$14,630 a year) as indicated by the Federal Poverty Level. In another example, a Cicero family of two adults and two children of the same age needs \$3,631 a month (\$43,575 a year) to make ends meet. However, according to the official Federal Poverty Level, such a family would only need \$1,471 a month (\$17,650 a year) to live. The Self-Sufficiency

Standard for Illinois is the first realistic means to measure the wages required to meet actual family living costs. These monthly costs include housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, taxes, and miscellaneous costs. The study takes into consideration the actual costs per area in Illinois. In contrast, the more commonly used Federal Poverty Level guideline is based on three times the cost of a family's minimal yearly food costs in the 1960's and updated to reflect inflation. However, food costs now make up less than one-third of a family's budget. Since living expenses for working families have greatly changed since the 1960's, the Federal Poverty Level tends to underestimate the amount



of money working class families need to spend to meet basic needs and get out of poverty. "The Self-Sufficiency Standard tells us that many working families can't cover their basic expenses. Costs are simply higher than what they earn, and no amount of good budgeting will change that," said Anne Ladky, executive director of Women Employed.

The study also shows that subsidies can help low-income families pay for childcare and healthcare, and that the Earned Income Tax Credit can make a big difference for low-income families. "One way to improve the situation is to ensure that low wage workers get subsidies and tax credits to which they are entitled. Another very important way is to make sure that

A single-parent family in Cicero needs to earn at least \$18.60 an hour just to make ends meet. The study, called the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Illinois, shows that a

people are able to access the education and training that they need to get jobs that pay self-sufficiency wages," said Ladky. The study is available from Women Employed. To obtain this study, or for

information, call Women Employed at 312-782-3902, or go to the website www.womenemployed.org.

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