



## Scholar's Study Shows Wage Needed to Make It

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A study was released Wednesday showing how much money a single parent or a family in South Dakota has to make to meet basic needs.

Rather than relying solely on federal poverty guidelines, the study compares local wages with transportation, housing, child-care and health-care costs on a county-by-county basis, said Diana Pearce, a University of Washington researcher who conducted the study.

She found that a single parent in Sioux Falls with a preschool child has to make \$11.25 an hour to live without government assistance. The figure for Rapid City is \$10.26 an hour.

For a family of two adults and two school-age children, the amount ranged from a single or combined wage of \$16.92 an hour in Minnehaha and Lincoln counties, to a low of \$12.72 in Dewey County in north central South Dakota.

"The Self-Sufficiency Standard for South Dakota is exciting because it measures the real level of income necessary for families to be self-sufficient without public or private supports in a given community in South Dakota," Pearce said.

She spent the past 10 months studying the state's wages. Her work was sponsored by the South Dakota Community Foundation and based on statistics from state agencies, nonprofit groups and others. The researcher has done similar studies in 12 states in an effort to find measures that better lay out the real costs and needs of families.

It takes into account the costs of securing adequate housing, child care, food, transportation, medical care, taxes and miscellaneous expenses. The standard is geographically specific because costs of living vary throughout the state. It does not include money for savings or education.

Pearce developed the methodology for the standard and first published results in 1996 for Iowa and California.

"This kind of information was very important in South Dakota," said Carol Robertson, director of South Dakota Community Concepts, a group that helped organize the project. "We've had very little information as to what does this mean for families."

Robertson said making changes to the wages in the state should not be the sole responsibility of businesses, but should be handled with a multifaceted approach. The report suggests that affordable housing, child care and health care - along with improved wages and benefits - would make a difference to a family's financial survival.

SOUTH DAKOTA, USA (94%);

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NORTH AMERICA (94%);

DIANA PEARCE (79%); CAROL ROBERTSON (63%); September 8, 2000