

1 parent, 2 kids need \$66,966 salary to afford O.C.

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OC Register
July 27th, 2008

A single parent with two young children needs to make \$31.71 an hour — \$66,966 a year — to afford housing, food, child care, transportation and other necessities in Orange County, says the Orange County United Way. The current California minimum wage is \$8 an hour (\$16,640 a year).

O.C. total costs for self sufficiency includes \$1,595 for housing for the family. An adult with no children could get by on \$15.24 an hour (\$32,177 a year) because they would pay a lesser \$1,330 for housing and not have to cover childcare costs, says the report.

The numbers come from a California family economic self-sufficiency standard created jointly by United Way, The Insight Center for Community Economic Development and more than 13 community-based organizations and other agencies. It was designed to show the gap for the working poor whose income exceeds the poverty levels that would allow them to get government aid, but who still can't make ends meet because of the high cost of living here.

The United Way says part of the problem for O.C. families is that they have been beset by skyrocketing costs over the last five years, including a 31% jump for housing. Child care is up 22% and health care soared 26%.

Over the next year, the United Way project said it plans to have pilot agencies use the self-sufficiency calculator in conjunction with job training, workforce development, education, housing and other family support programs as a larger program and policy strategy to get families off of public benefits and into high-wage, family-sustaining jobs for the long-term.

“Our pilot agencies and network of community partners have provided the resources to connect families to services and programs they need to truly prosper,” said Maria Chavez Wilcox, president of Orange County United Way. “With the over 150,000 households in Orange County earning less than \$25,000 a year, we know the need to build self-sufficient lives is great.”