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THE COST OF LIVING CAN VARY ACROSS THE MIDWEST, COUNTRY

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Last week, the **Self-Sufficiency Standard** (SSS) was featured as a measure of the cost to provide for a family's basic needs (housing, food, clothing, child care, transportation and health care) for several Wisconsin counties. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) also offers a free online family budget calculator. Although calculated differently than the SSS, the EPI calculator enables easy comparisons of 400 communities throughout the U.S.

According to the EPI, Nantucket, Mass., requires the largest basic annual family budget, \$73,345 for a family consisting of two parents and two children. The least expensive is Marshall County, Miss., where the same family needs \$35,733 to cover basic necessities. The following chart provides the basic budget for a family of four for several Midwestern metropolitan areas. For similar data for other communities, goto:http://www.epi.org/budget_form.cfm?CFID=3164169&CFTOKEN=17899027 . Go to: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/economies/communityindicators/communityindicators8_self_sufficiency_002.pdf for more information on self-sufficiency and poverty.

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