



## Study: Families Can't Live On Minimum Wage

**July 23 (BCN)** — Single-parent families cannot subsist on wages earned from a full-time minimum wage job, and even with state or federal assistance, such families can barely scrape by, according to a new study by a national advocacy group.

The group, Wider Opportunities for Women, held a teleconference this morning to release the results of the study, which surveyed 10 communities in 10 states nationwide. In each community, the study focused on one three-person family consisting of an adult, an infant and a toddler.

WOW's report, titled "Coming Up Short," is based on a study conducted by Dr. Diana Pierce of the School of Social work at the University of Washington.

One of the study's goals was to provide state and federal legislators with a "snapshot of how well working families are able to make ends meet today," according to the report.

Speakers in today's teleconference underscored the importance of government assistance to low-income households. "Our report makes clear that federal policies are a critical ingredient of families' well-being," said WOW executive director Joan Kuriansky.

Of the 10 counties surveyed, the sample family in the lowest-cost location, New Orleans, needed \$27,660 to be self-sufficient. In the highest-cost location, Boston, the sample family required \$59,544 to subsist.

In California, a sample family residing in Davis needed \$40,196 in order to have their basic needs met.

None of the families surveyed would be able to survive on the income from one parent working a full-time minimum-wage job. The income from such a job, on average, only covers 34 percent of single parent families' basic costs of living, the study found.

Maureen Golga, director of WOW's Family Economic Self Sufficiency Project, said even families earning higher wages need help from the government.

"Only when working full-time at \$12 per hour and receiving full housing assistance, childcare, food stamps and health care can the majority of sample families achieve economic independence," Golga said.

Aimee Durfee, program specialist for Californians for Economic Self-Sufficiency, said one step in the right direction would be to raise the federal minimum wage.

"The minimum wage floor set by the federal government is simply too low," she said.

Another change recommended by the report is to define a "self sufficiency standard" at the federal level. The standard would serve as a benchmark to assess the effect of policies regarding low-income families and would be helpful in collecting and analyzing data, researchers said.

Also, the study recommends investing in job training and education, believed to be key elements of families pulling themselves out of poverty.

Today's speakers hope the study will raise awareness among legislators that, as Durfee puts it, "working people are just not getting out what they put in."

The study is available on WOW's Web site at <http://www.wowonline.org/>.