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We are grateful for the many outreach programs of our parishes, schools, and Catholic Charities. Building on that long tradition we invite parish leaders to look for ways to develop personal relationships with the poor and to explore proven long-term approaches to lifting children and families out of poverty.

We encourage your social ministry committees to study these ideas and contact the regional Justice and Peace staff at your local Catholic Charities offices as you plan your initiatives. Further educational material will be available in September.

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The Reality of Child Poverty

Throughout the Diocese, child poverty rates range from 13.3% in Ontario County to 27.3% in Yates County. In the City of Rochester, 50.1% of children live in poverty—the highest in the nation for cities of comparable size. Recent statistics show that children under the age of 6 were the poorest age group in New York State. While no one should be poor, it is especially painful that so many of our children suffer the ravages of poverty.

75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age 5. Childhood poverty has an impact on children for their entire lives.

Most people in poverty are employed. More than two-thirds of poor families are working.

Children are poor because their parents and families are poor; too often this is carried over from one generation to the next. To get off the “poverty treadmill”, families need a living wage that pays enough to lift them out of poverty.

Families in poverty need subsidies for child care so they are not forced to choose between what is best for their child and what is best for their employer.

To move out of poverty, families need to have more stable families, better schools, less income inequality, less segregation, and stronger social networks. So while food cupboards and clothing closets are essential in the short term, they do not alone bring about the changes in society that are necessary to move people out of poverty.

Mental and physical disabilities appear in families across social and ethnic lines. Children who live in poverty, however, suffer the highest risk of physical and mental disability. Poor nutrition can result in physical and developmental disabilities. 55% of those who are homeless have mental health issues.

Studies have shown a clear indication that addiction is linked to poverty. Drug addiction or alcohol addiction results in a decline in socio-economic status, but there are also indications that being raised in poverty can put a person at greater risk of becoming a drug or alcohol abuser.

In a 2005 study, 73% of women undergoing an abortion cited not being able to afford a baby now as a reason for the abortion. That number rose to 81% for women below the federal poverty line. And while the abortion rate for American women thankfully declined by 8% between 2000 and 2008, among poor American women it increased by 18%.

Sources:

USDA report Feb. 2015, <http://ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-level-data-sets/poverty.aspx>; Ed Doherty, *Benchmarking Rochester's Poverty*, 2015.

“Fact Sheet,” September 2013, The Children’s Agenda.

The poorest 20% of non-elderly American households relied on work-related income for more than two-thirds (69.7 %) of their total incomes in 2010. <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-americas-pay/>

<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/therapy-soup/2013/03/poverty-homelessness-mental-illness-by-the-numbers/>

<http://www.acenterforrecovery.com/articles/society/addiction-and-poverty/>

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/2014/poverty-and-abortion.cfm>

Proven Long-term Approaches to Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Grounded in Catholic Social Teaching

“It remains true, however, that every form of externally imposed poverty has at its root a lack of respect for the transcendent dignity of the human person.”
(Pope Benedict XVI, 2009 Message for the World Day of Peace)

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Poverty is a pro-life issue

- Cash assistance provided directly to families is one of the most effective and efficient ways to reduce stress and improve long-term health outcomes for low-income families.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Who speaks up for children?

- Investments in programs and services targeted to very young children have the greatest impact, and can change the trajectory of a child’s life.
- Evidence-based home visiting programs have been proven to result in dramatically improved life outcomes for both the mother and the baby, in terms of physical and mental health, criminal involvement, time on welfare, and other measures.
- Similarly, children who have access to high quality early childhood educational experiences are more likely to complete high school and college and are less likely to depend on welfare, need special education, and become pregnant as a teenager.



Call to Family and Community Participation: Employment should not prevent a person from caring for a new or ill family member

- Paid family leave is a proven support for young families and children; it is associated with longer periods of breastfeeding and lower infant and child mortality rates. Employers in states with paid family leave insurance report higher retention rates and reduced costs associated with job turnover.
- When parents are able to care for a sick child, research shows that children have quicker recoveries, stronger vital signs and shorter hospital stays.

Subsidiarity: Parents are in the best position to decide what their families need

- The Earned Income Tax Credit—a subsidy provided to working families with no strings attached—was key to the successful reduction in child poverty rates in Great Britain from 2000-2010, during a time when child poverty rates rose in the U.S. and other developed nations.
- Research indicates that children in families receiving the credits do better in school, are likelier to attend college, and can be expected to earn more as adults.
- Working-family tax credits encourage parents to work and avoid public assistance.

Dignity of Work: A job with just wages and working conditions is the best path out of poverty

- Paying a living wage to all staff in parishes and Catholic-run institutions shows the Church practices its own teaching on justice.
- Two parents working full-time at the minimum wage do not earn enough to pay for child care (\$8000-\$12,000 per year), housing, food, transportation, clothing and other necessities.
- Parents who must work 2 or 3 jobs or whose work schedules are unpredictable are less able to provide a consistent, nurturing environment for their young children.

Solidarity: What harms my brother and sister anywhere harms us all

- Our communities are stronger when families can support themselves with adequate wages.
- Paying a living wage helps low-wage workers to be less dependent on government subsidies such as Food Stamps (now called SNAP) and Earned Income Tax Credits.

Care for Creation: The poor often suffer the greatest impact of pollution and climate change effects

- Poor air quality and lead poisoning have long-term negative impacts on children's health, education, and behavior. We can give children a better, healthier start with greater likelihood of success in school by cleaning up their environment.
- Climate change effects such as flooding and drought often have the greatest negative impact on the poor.



Examples and Ideas for Parishes

“In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons.”

Pope Francis, Speaking to Students of Jesuit Schools, June 7, 2013

Communities of Salt and Light—the Social Mission of the Parish

In 1993 the US Bishops issued a reflection on the social mission of the parish known as *Communities of Salt and Light*. In this document the bishops asked us to think about how we can respond to social issues, such as Children and Families in Poverty, in every aspect of parish life, including worship, faith formation, and action. They outlined seven dimensions of parish life. Utilizing these seven dimensions, here are some ways your parish can respond to poverty, including current practices from parishes around the Diocese.

1. Anchoring Social Ministry: Prayer and Worship

During General Intercessions, include prayers:

- For families who are struggling to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, health care, and education;
- For elected leaders and decision-makers who are in a position to make choices about funding programs that serve low-income families;
- That employers and business owners adopt policies and wage rates that allow parents to adequately support their families through work.



Use the prayer resources provided by Rice Bowl from Catholic Relief Services and from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. See <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/parish-life/csl-prayer-and-worship.cfm> for additional ideas.

St. Mary's, Elmira, Social Ministry hosts/leads a Lenten Stations of the Cross for Justice and Peace on Good Friday, using a format offered by USCCB, Maryknoll, and/or CRS that integrates current day justice and peace concerns into the reflection at each station.

2. Sharing the Message: Preaching and Education

Through homilies, adult education forums, and bulletin announcements, educate parishioners about how they can contribute to effective anti-poverty efforts by:

- Donating time, skills or money to organizations that use proven strategies to lift families out of poverty;
- When reviewing candidates for public office, serious consideration should be given to their efforts to alleviate poverty and to seek long term solutions to poverty, as well as their efforts on other pro-life issues;
- Speaking with dignity and mercy about families who face barriers to self-sufficiency and need assistance.

3. Supporting the "Salt of the Earth": Family, Work, Citizenship

Encourage elected leaders to support the following legislative proposals:

- Paid Family Leave Insurance (A.3870/S.3004) – Expand the existing Temporary Disability Insurance program to allow workers up to 12 weeks to care for a new child or an ill family member or to adjust to military deployment;
- Parent education and family support – Support NYS budget allocations for evidence-based home visitation services such as Healthy Families to help vulnerable young parents care for their children and pursue education or employment;
- Child care subsidies – Combine a public subsidy with a parent co-pay so that a low income parent can afford high quality child care; subsidies have been proven to result in more school success for the children and more stable employment for the parent.

Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick Parish (Tioga County) Social Ministry makes mail-in voter registration forms available during presidential election years and publishes a series of short pieces in the bulletin regarding Catholic Social Teaching on citizenship, participation, common good, etc.

Sacred Heart Cathedral offers a youth outreach program for families in the Northwest neighborhoods in Rochester.

4. Serving the "Least of These": Outreach and Charity

- Volunteer at schools or child care centers in low-income neighborhoods;
- Volunteer with the C.A.S.H. programs to help working parents obtain the tax credits they are eligible for;
- Help relieve parental stress by donating to mental health clinics that serve the uninsured or underinsured.

Saint Mary of the Lake in Watkins Glen has initiated a weekly meal ministry called the Community Table. Parishioners and guests share the meal together on an evening when Catholic Charities is open, making it convenient for guests to access services after enjoying a hearty meal.

Blessed Sacrament in Rochester offers an evening meal Monday through Friday. On Tuesday evenings a group of volunteer professionals assist the guests with blood pressure, weight, diabetes monitoring, and assistance in connecting with social services and filling out forms.

Transfiguration Parish in Pittsford invites parishioners to buy Christmas baskets and gifts for needy families and to contact the family they are helping. 50% of the parishioners who buy these gifts agree to reach out to make personal contact with the recipient family.

HOPE Ministry from Holy Trinity Church in Webster responds to immediate needs of the poor, but they also meet one on one with recipients during each visit to build a relationship.

St. Joseph in Penfield and other parishes organize volunteers for city schools to give one on one attention to students. They also provide weekend food for 50 students from School 50 through the Back Pack program.

Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church in Rochester supports the Children's Crisis Center at Family Court by providing food, clothing, toys, and children's books.

5. Advocating for Justice: Legislative Action

- Support increases in the minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit so that full-time work equals self-sufficiency.

The Social Ministry Committee of Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick Parish in Tioga County meets monthly. Each month one member is responsible for researching an issue and facilitating discussion during the meeting. At the following meeting someone brings a prepared letter on parish stationery addressed to the appropriate elected leaders. The committee members sign the letter and it goes in the mail. Responses received are reviewed and the advocacy may continue. Information on the issues addressed are shared in the parish bulletin on a regular basis.

23 parishes in Monroe county participated in the Children's Interfaith Weekend in October by signing petitions to increase child care subsidies for working families.

Parishioners from the 12 counties of the Diocese gathered 10,3623 signatures in support of the first nine items of the Women's Equality Act and against the tenth item on expanding NY State statutes on abortion.

6. Creating Community: Organizing for Justice

- Encourage parishioners to support the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and projects funded by CCHD.

Christ the Redeemer Parish Social Ministry participates in the Chemung County Housing Coalition, engaging with community partners in advocacy and education to improve decent and affordable housing.

In urban and suburban Rochester six parishes, along with the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph, have joined with other congregations and groups to address poverty, education, and criminal justice. Their community organization, known as Rochester Alliance of Communities Transforming Society (Roc/ACTS), is training its leaders to address the causes of poverty by building relationships and cooperative strength within its diverse membership. This ministry is funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

7. Building Solidarity: Beyond Parish Boundaries

- Encourage parishioners to support Catholic Relief Services' programs overseas, which promote education, peacebuilding and microfinance.
- Purchase fair-trade products which pay a living wage to the artisans and farmers in developing countries.



Center for Governmental Research's Long-Term Solutions

The latest research by the Center for Governmental Research for the United Way of Greater Rochester, which covers a 9-county region, offers the following six strategies as most successful:

1. Broad-based tax and programmatic support for families

The United Kingdom provides the strongest modern example of how to substantively reduce poverty in a broad swath of society. Over several years starting in 1999, the British significantly increased the minimum wage, and tax credits for people with children, for those with low incomes and for child care; and expanded paid maternity leave, preschool, home-visiting, and other programs for disadvantaged families with young children. Despite a deep economic recession, child poverty rates dropped from 26.1% in 1998 to 10.6% in 2010.

2. Child care subsidies

Several studies of the effects of child care subsidies have shown they provide critical support allowing low-income parents to maintain employment and raise their economic status.

3. Income supplements

A study of Cherokee Native Americans who received supplemental payments of \$6,000 per person annually through their tribal government found the extra income had significant, positive impacts on the mental health and behavior of children, particularly children who were very young when the payments began. This group was one-third less likely to develop substance abuse and psychiatric problems in adulthood. Minor crimes by youth declined, and graduation rates improved as well. The researchers believe the payments improved parenting by removing the stress on families of living hand-to-mouth.

4. Sectorial job training





Programs evaluated in Milwaukee, Boston, and New York City that provided targeted job training to participants directly related to the workforce needs of one or more local employers were found to significantly increase employment and earnings.

5. College aid application assistance

H&R Block, a national tax preparation company, developed an intervention to assist low or moderate-income customers who had a family member at or near college age. The company developed software that used the family's tax return data to fill out most responses on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. A tax preparation professional would then conduct a ten minute interview to answer the remaining questions on the form. Compared to a control group, people receiving the assistance were significantly more likely to attend and persist in college.

6. Expanding the availability of affordable housing in the broader community

A 2010 study of student performance in Montgomery County, Maryland suggests that the county's requirement to include low-cost housing (rental or owned) in every new housing development has had a substantial, long-term, impact on the performance of low-income students in school. After 7 years in a low-poverty school, low-income students have closed 50% of the achievement gap with their more affluent peers. <http://reports.cgr.org/details/1757>

Agency	Emergency Services	Support Service	Special Needs	Housing Services	Food Services
<p>Catholic Family Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,000 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging & Adult Services - 15,000 served • Children Youth & Family - 3,000 served • Healthy Sisters - 40 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Clinic - 2,000 served • Restart Drug & Alcohol Treatment - 2,844 served • Refugee, Immigration & Language Services - 2,000 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters & Supportive Housing - 1,700 served 	
<p>Catholic Charities Community Services (Serving 12 Counties)</p>	<p>Over 35,000 in our twelve county diocese received emergency assistance in 2014</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Disabilities - 400 served • Care Coordination - 1,100 served • Supportive Services - 1,000 served 	 <p>Through a second collection authorized by Bishop Matano in March, Catholic Charities helped 500 families with heating assistance</p>	
<p>Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuylers Counties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,000 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach - Schuylers - 11,000 served • RSVP - Schuylers - 350 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Services (Chemung) - 661 served (Schuylers) - 24 served 		
<p>Catholic Charities of Livingston County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,854 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of Caring 125 served • Faith in Action Transportation - 133 served • HOPE Youth Mentoring - 58 served • SSI/SSD Case Mgmt - 33 served • TASA - 46 served 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Housing - 77 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Pantry - 3,985 served
<p>Catholic Charities of Steuben County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning Point - 9,500 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance Abuse Prevention - 6,968 served • Healthy Families - 220 families served • Therapeutic Foster Care - 33 children served • Family Preservation SHAPE - 186 families served • Bath Community Child Day Care - 145 children served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinship Community Residence - 61 men served • Kinship Supportive Living - 29 men served 	 <p>Through 162 Member Agencies, the Food Bank helps 150,000 different individuals each year</p>	
<p>Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes (Serving 4 Counties)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Assistance (includes HEAP) - 3,000 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised Visitation - 77 families served • Case Management - 64 families served • SSI Advocacy - 32 served 	 <p>Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Rochester touched the lives of nearly 250,000 individuals in our twelve county diocese in 2014</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Lunch Program - 14,200 meals served
<p>Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tompkins County - 2,000 served • Tioga County - 650 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration Svcs - Tompkins - 1,325 served • Nutrition Outreach - Tompkins - 150 served • Nutrition Outreach - Tioga - 66 served • Family Empowerment Svcs - Tompkins - 135 served • Youth Mentoring / Education - Tioga - 34 served 			
<p>Catholic Charities of Wayne County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,000 served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood Counseling & Intervention - 125 served • College Bound - 200 served • Counseling - 210 served • Positive Attitude, Responsible Citizen - 750 served • Persons In Need of Supervision - 32 served • La Casa - 90 served 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Assistance - 3,000 served
<p>Food Bank of the Southern Tier (Serving 6 Counties)</p>			<p>Food assistance in 2014 was at an all time high</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Distribution to 162 Member Agencies - 483,549 children, 611,509 adults, 184,107 seniors (1,300,000 duplicate count) • Mobile Food Pantry - 160,000 served • Back Pack Program - 2,000 students served • SNAP/Food Stamp Outreach - 300 households • Just Say Yes to Fruits & Vegetables - 1,660 class participants
<p>Camp Stella Maris</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Camp Participants - 2,666 served • ABLE Participants - 1,449 served • Off Season - 64 groups - 3,073 served 				
<p>Providence Housing Development</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,500 individuals served in 22 projects