

# POVERTY IS NOT NEGLECT.

Kentucky is ranked 5th in states with the highest poverty rate in America. Kentucky ranks 17.3% of population living below the poverty line. (DePietro, 2021)

According to the Census Bureau, the 2021 poverty threshold for a family of four (1 adult and 3 minor children) is an annual income of \$27,575. (United States Census Bureau, 2022). Meanwhile,

the average childcare cost for 1 child in Kentucky is \$6,411 annually. (Economic Policy Institute, 2020)

**The World Health Organization defines poverty as when individual or household income is below what is needed for sustenance. (What Is Poverty? A Definition from Five Talents, 2018)**

**To be poverty stricken is more complex than having an isolated financial crisis or low income. Poverty by definition is a pattern of not being able to provide sustenance and chronic lack of resources.**

**Neglect refers to the failure of a parent to provide for the development of the child – where the parent is in a position to do so – in one or more of the following areas: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions. Neglect is thus distinguished from circumstances of poverty in that neglect can occur only in cases where reasonable resources are available to the family or caregiver. (World Health Organization, n.d.)**

Distinguishing neglect from poverty can be extremely difficult at times. Historically, poverty is defined and measured in two ways absolute poverty and relational or relative poverty. Absolute poverty measures are a threshold and hold static in society, for example what food deprivation was 100 years leading to malnourishment is what food deprivation is today. Relative poverty measures consider the exclusion of an individual/family/ community in relationship to others and the ability to meet needs in that culture, society, and historical time period. It is also important to note that the ways in which poverty is experienced can also have different impacts of exclusion based off of race, ethnicity, nationality, neighborhood, or region. Similarly with wealth, poverty can be generational, which means that the impact and effects of poverty are durable and can be reproduced from generation to generation. These situations can include an ongoing lack of access to basic necessities, transportation, income, housing and resources. When individuals lack the access to basic needs, including public assistance, it can often be extremely difficult for individuals to provide for their children/families and people often must make the difficult decisions between bills forcing them into poverty and meeting basic needs. As described above, neglect can often be described as a caregiver failing to provide basic needs for a child, an omission of basic care. However, research shows increasing concrete supports for families leads to a reduction of child maltreatment. (Puls HT, 2021) Evidence suggests when economic & concrete supports are increased, child welfare involvement will decrease. Examples of economic supports are, minimum wage increase, employment, earned income tax credit (EITC), public benefits (TANF), child support, sustained income support. Examples of concrete supports are, Medicaid, supportive housing, paid family leave, childcare, SNAP & WIC, and legal support. In Kentucky, from SFY 2020 to SFY 2021, prevention expenditures increased by \$3 million causing out-of-home care expenditures to decrease by \$27.6 million.

## Indicators of Poverty

Lack of education

Lack of employment or income

Lack of access to public assistance due to lack of resources/transportation/ Understanding

Lack of access to health insurance and impact of poverty in the area

Lack of access to safe drinking water

Lack of access to basic sanitation services and reliable electricity

Lack of basic modern assets (internet, radio, TV, telephone, computer, bike, motorbike, etc.)

Economic and social conditions that influence health status\*

Health promoting factors that impact living conditions, such as: distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power\*

*\*Social Determinants of Health are mostly shaped by socio-cultural attitudes and public policy*