Is Poverty Making us Sick?

Shining a Light on Poverty Discussion Series, January 30, 2014
Office of Economic Opportunity, Vermont Department for Children and Families

Tracy Dolan, Deputy Commissioner of Health
YES.
How do we define poverty?

- ‘In the United States, the definition is an idea of absolute poverty. What that means is we’re looking at how much money you need to support a particular standard of living, to buy a certain amount of calories, to buy a certain standard of housing’ (Harford)

- Poverty is deprivation due to a lack of resources, both material and non-material, e.g. income, housing, health, education, knowledge and culture.
Who lives below the Poverty Level in Vermont?

- 11% of all Vermonters
- 21% of all children under 6
- 40% of Vermont families with a single mother and children under age 5

2011 National Center for children in poverty
2012 National Census
Access to Care Varies among Vermonters

# full-time equivalent primary care physicians per 100,000 people, by county
% of Vermonters age 25+ with less than a high school education, by county
Vermont adults who report having a chronic health condition, by Federal Poverty Level

Chronic Conditions & Income
Vermont adults who report having a chronic condition, by Federal Poverty Level • 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Higher Income</th>
<th>Lower Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Disease &amp; Stroke</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Costs of Lower Incomes

Low income Vermonters are more likely to:

- Eat less than they feel they should
- Compromise quality for quantity
- NOT get enough physical activity
- Smoke

% of Vermont adult smokers, by Federal Poverty Level

- < 1¼ times poverty level: 37%
- 1¼ - 2½ times poverty level: 21%
- 2½ - 3½ times poverty level: 15%
- > 3½ times poverty level: 9%
Health Costs of Lower Incomes

Low income Vermont mothers are more likely to:

- Have inadequate prenatal care
- Smoke during pregnancy
- Have low birthweight babies

And less likely to:

- Breastfeed
Parent’s education matters

Childbirth & Education

Mother’s educational level –
- no high school diploma
- high school graduates
- some college
- 4 year degree +

- Low birthweight
  - % of live births
  - 9% no high school diploma
  - 7% high school graduates
  - 6% some college
  - 4% 4 year degree +

- Pre-term deliveries
  - % of live births
  - 12% no high school diploma
  - 10% high school graduates
  - 9% some college
  - 7% 4 year degree +

- Infant mortality
  - # deaths per 1,000 live births
  - 7.8 no high school diploma
  - 5.5 high school graduates
  - 5.7 some college
  - 4.0 4 year degree +
Beyond their Depression –

% Vermonters age 18+ who have a chronic disease among those who have –

- Asthma: 15% depression, 9% no depression
- Cancer: 8% depression, 5% no depression
- Cardiovascular Disease: 11% depression, 6% no depression
- Diabetes: 10% depression, 5% no depression
- Lung Disease: 5% depression, 2% no depression
- Obesity: 34% depression, 20% no depression
Whose fault is it?
Does it matter?

Sure glad the hole isn’t at our end.
'cause I know the biggest crime
is just to throw up your hands
say this has nothing to do with me
I just want to live as comfortably as I can
you got to look outside your eyes
you got to think outside your brain
you got to walk outside your life
to where the neighborhood changes

*Ani DiFranco, Willing to Fight*