



2018 Policy and Advocacy Framework

As an agency committed to serving those most in need, our strategic position requires us to acknowledge that despite our best efforts, we cannot serve our way out of poverty. In fact, our clients’ challenges often serve as evidence of broken and unjust systems. We therefore work simultaneously to both increase stability for families and individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness and dismantle policies that perpetuate disparate access to economic mobility along racial and socioeconomic lines.

There is increased evidence that communities and regions that pursue both economic growth *and* social justice and equity can make progress on both; those that pursue one at the expense of the other achieve neither. In 2018 Catholic Charities will work to advance policy dedicated to improved outcomes related to **economic mobility, housing stability, and child and family wellbeing**.

Level of engagement speaks to the extent to which Catholic Charities anticipates working toward a particular action item. Below is a summary of engagement levels. The scale symbol indicates legislative advocacy. ⚖️

Lead

- High visibility for Catholic Charities; leadership provided.
- Significant issue expertise and highly credible knowledge base.
- Involved in the day-to-day work of moving an issue, including strategy and legislation development.

Support

- Moderate visibility.
- Engagement largely through coalition partnership.
- Commitment to educating our constituency about the issue and opportunities to engage.

Endorse/Monitor

- Informed but minimally involved.
- Formal institutional support (our name attached).
- Maintain current knowledge of the issue and its status with an eye toward potential involvement.

Goal 1: Advance policies and programs that disrupt cycles of poverty and create pathways to economic mobility.

Breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty requires a research-based, multi-generational approach that increases access to education, employment opportunities, housing affordable to multiple levels of incomes, and viable transit options that connect housing to jobs.

- Research shows that children in households with unstable housing and/or parental employment are at increased risk of numerous health problems, school failure, housing instability, unemployment, and limited earning potential as adults.
- According to the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data (2016):
 - African Americans were over five times as likely to be living in poverty as were their white, non-Hispanic neighbors in the Greater MSP region.
 - African Americans living in Greater MSP also experienced significantly higher rates of unemployment (9.5%) than their White non-Hispanic counterparts (2.8%) did.
 - Roughly half of the Minnesota households living in poverty are composed of single mothers with children, which benefit most from supports for work and early childhood education.

- The Minnesota KIDS COUNT Data Book on the status of children estimates that 88% of children in income-eligible households are not enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), due to insufficient program funding.

LEAD: In partnership with the Kids Can’t Wait Coalition, enact state legislation toward Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) conformity with federal family-friendly provisions, such as the reduction of barriers to accessing the program for families experiencing homelessness--which improves stability for children through support of parents striving toward full employment. ⚖️

SUPPORT: In partnership with the Minnesota Asset Building Coalition, expand the practice of alternative payment programs for court fees and fines in order to encourage people with non-violent offenses to make a fresh start by cleaning up their record. ⚖️

ENDORSE/MONITOR: Support the advancement of Citizens League recommendations to evaluate existing transit routes to ensure the best means to more directly connect areas of concentrated poverty with job centers and high-growth industry clusters, and support public investments in transit and transportation.

Goal 2: Advocate for policies and funding that support housing stability--from preventing and responding to homelessness, to creating opportunities for people considered “hard to house.”

Stable, safe and affordable housing is the greatest opportunity structure in our society, and influences access to employment, education, transportation, health care and nutritious food. In recent years, rents across the state of Minnesota and throughout the Twin Cities have risen faster than renters’ incomes.

- According to the 2015 Wilder Research homeless study:
 - Adults most often reported leaving their last housing due to their inability to afford rent or mortgage (36%), and 22% reported there is no housing available they can afford.
 - 41% of adults experiencing homelessness are on a wait list for subsidized housing, and another 14% cannot get on the wait list because it is closed.
 - 30% of Catholic Charities clients surveyed identified a criminal history as the major barrier to stable housing.
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development found in its 2016 point-in-time data that unsheltered counts for both Ramsey County and the Suburban Metro Counties (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Scott and Washington) tripled between 2015 and 2016.
- 2016 ACS data reveal that 57% of Minnesota rental households with annual incomes less than \$20,000, are spending at least half of their income on housing.

LEAD: Partner with Homes for All coalition to promote public investment in programs that prevent homelessness for all—primarily through Housing Infrastructure Bonds and housing supports for individuals experiencing long-term homelessness. ⚖️

LEAD: Identify and develop strategies that reduce barriers to access stable housing for adults and families, particularly restrictive rental requirements that exclude people with criminal histories, prior evictions, housing subsidies, and limited or no rental history.

SUPPORT: Foster a welcoming community for New American families by securing parishes to support their resettlement.

ENDORSE/MONITOR: Support the advancement of statewide efforts to eliminate homelessness among military veterans.

Goal 3: Invest in the wellbeing of children and families through the advancement of necessary child welfare system reforms in partnership with key stakeholders.

Children of color and American Indians are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system due to a complex set of interrelated forces, including: institutional racism (bias in identification and reporting, inequitable health and education outcomes), poverty and the impact of historical trauma. Historical trauma refers to the cumulative emotional and psychological impact of traumatic experiences of a cultural group, such as genocide, forced assimilation, slavery, or involuntary surrender of lands. Inconsistent application of family support program requirements and/or involvement with the child welfare system compounds the experience of historical trauma and increases levels of stress experienced by members of distressed households.

Research has shown, however, that reductions in the sources of family stress mitigates the impact of historical trauma as well as the occurrence of adverse childhood experiences, a major factor for improved child and parent/caregiver wellbeing.

- The 2013 Minnesota Child Welfare report found that American Indian children are 15.5 times, and African American children 4 times more likely to be removed from their homes, compared to their white counterparts.
- Of the children removed from their homes and placed in Catholic Charities’ St. Joseph’s Home for Children emergency shelter during fiscal year 2017, 78% were from a specific racial community of color or multiracial; African Americans constituted the highest placement rate at 52%, followed by American Indians at 11%.
- Evaluation conducted by Healthy Families America in 20 states demonstrated positive outcomes in reduced child maltreatment through the use of targeted support and home visits to overburdened families.

SUPPORT: Work in partnership with the Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting to increase state funding to support home visiting to prevent future child protection involvement. 

SUPPORT: Advancement of a training academy that supports both intensive training and retention of child protection workers and their supervisors and includes a cultural competency component. 

SUPPORT: In partnership with the Mental Health Legislative Network, enact legislation to ensure adequate, equitable access to mental health care and an increase in day treatment provider rates. 

SUPPORT: Coordination of services for integrated delivery and family success, including support for pilot project model legislation. 

ENDORSE/MONITOR: Increase the availability of MinneMinds early learning scholarships to minimize the academic gap and expand access to education for all. 

Goal 4: Support policies and programs that (1) acknowledge that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other and (2) endorse governmental systems that are marked by integrity and transparency. We will monitor and endorse the following, as appropriate:

- Participation in governance through voter registration, restoration of voting rights to ex-offenders upon re-entry.
- Diverse workforce development and cultural proficiency among providers of mental health.
- Fiscal policies and government systems that promote both economic growth and vitality, as well as equity.
- Tax policies that facilitate optimal nonprofit service delivery to the community, including tax exemptions and deductions for charitable giving.
- Transparency in campaign finance.
- Investments in bonding for critical public projects beyond housing that serve Minnesotans in need.