

Helping people, changing lives

Chautauqua
Opportunities, Inc

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What is a Poverty Simulation?

The poverty simulation experience is designed to help participants understand what it might be like to be a part of a low income family trying to survive from month to month. It is a simulation, not a game. The object is to sensitize participants to the realities of life for low income people.



In 2001, over 500 people were HOMELESS in Chautauqua County.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The simulation requires the involvement of 75 participants. The participants assume the roles of 26 different families living in poverty. The task of the “families” is to provide for basic necessities and shelter for one “month” consisting of four fifteen minute “weeks”.

The simulation is conducted in a large room with the “families” seated in groups in the center. Around the perimeter are tables representing community resources and services for the families. These services include a bank, church food pantry, employment office, pawn broker, grocery, welfare office, currency exchange, a utility collector, a landlord/rent collector, and a school. COI’s management staff plays the role of the workers at those tables. Also circulating in this “community” are a police officer, and a mayor.

This simulation is designed for 3 1/2 hour fixed frame. It includes an introduction and briefing, the actual simulation exercise, and a debriefing period in which participants and volunteer staffers share their feelings and experiences.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

The poverty simulation experience can be an “eye-opener” to anyone who wishes to understand more about the realities of poverty. The simulation is an effective tool for many audiences including professionals who provide services for low income families, members of a religious organization, and women’s or fraternal organizations, students (12th grade or higher). The simulation is also valuable for people who are developing policies around services for low income individuals and/or families.

HOW WAS THIS SIMULATION DEVELOPED

The Poverty Simulation is a copyrighted learning tool which was created by the Reform Organization of Welfare (ROWEL) Education Association, a Missouri organization of people with low incomes and their allies working together to inform the larger community about the inadequacies and injustices of the current welfare system. It seeks to move citizens beyond compassion to an active commitment to work toward social justice.

This version of the simulation has been updated with support from and in cooperation with Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which is promoting use of the simulation as a part of its recent organizational emphasis on Women and Children Living in Poverty.



C H A U T A U Q U A O P P O R T U N I T I E S ,
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