

2020 INTERIM REPORT



INTERAGENCY WORKGROUP
ON POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INSECURITY



Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

On May 20, 2020, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Intergenerational Poverty Act (305 ILCS 70), creating the Interagency Workgroup on Poverty and Economic Insecurity (IWPES) and enumerating this group's objectives to "(i) understand the root causes of poverty and economic insecurity; (ii) identify children who are at risk of continuing in the cycle of poverty absent intervention; and (iii) implement data-driven policies and programs that address poverty, education, economic development, and other areas as needed to measurably reduce the incidence of child poverty."

The Intergenerational Poverty Act also calls upon the Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security (CPEES) to develop a strategic plan to address poverty and economic insecurity in Illinois. The Interagency Workgroup first convened at the end of July 2020 and is pleased to present to the Commission this interim report on the state of poverty in Illinois, a snapshot of the state's existing antipoverty programs, and several policy recommendations for ending intergenerational poverty and economic insecurity.

Mission, Principles, Goals of the IWGP

The following Mission, Guiding Principles and Goals reflect both the spirit of the Workgroup's authorizing legislation as well as the input and feedback of its members. The Workgroup is meant to serve as an engine that propels the work of the Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security (CPEES) through thought partnership, policy development, and strategy execution.

Mission: The Mission of the IWPES is to advance of the work of the CPEES by studying systems that perpetuate poverty, improving interagency coordination, and implementing policies and programs that break the cycle of poverty.

Guiding Principles:

- Engage and listen to those with lived experience
- Employ an equity lens (gender, race, geography, age, ability, etc.)
- Focus on systemic change to both reduce and prevent poverty
- Promote asset-based instead of deficit-based social supports
- Ensure policies are data-informed and evidence-based
- Leverage innovation and social impact
- Cultivate collaboration across the public and private sectors
- Evaluate impact and adapt strategies as needed

Goals:

- Work with the Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security to:
 - Reduce deep poverty in this State by 50 percent by 2026;
 - Eliminate child poverty in this State by 2031;
 - Eliminate all poverty in this State by 2036
- Accomplish this by:
 - Understanding the root causes of intergenerational poverty and economic insecurity, including contributing social, economic, and cultural factors;
 - Assisting the Commission in the development of a strategic plan, including sharing data and information;
 - Implementing the strategic plan adopted by the Commission.

Key Takeaways: Need and Existing Resources

- **Poverty rates in Illinois have not drastically changed** over the last 30 years. In 2018, 12.1 percent of Illinoisans experienced poverty. For context, in 2018 the federal poverty threshold for a family of three was \$20,231.
- In Illinois, **Black women are three times more likely to experience poverty than white men.** Policies that excluded Black families from owning homes and building wealth laid the foundation for these disparities, and the COVID-19 pandemic is further such exacerbating disparities.
- **One in three Black children in Illinois experienced poverty** in 2018. 42 percent of children born to parents in the bottom fifth of the economic distribution remain there as adults, so addressing child poverty is key to improving intergenerational mobility.
- **Social mobility has declined in Illinois and the country as a whole.** The share of Illinois children who earn more than their parents has declined by almost 50 percent over the last 50 years.
- **At least 66 state-administered antipoverty programs exist in Illinois.** Child and youth development, direct assistance, and healthcare programs are most common.
- Poverty research and policy is typically motivated by one or more of the leading theories of poverty, some of which narrowly explain poverty as the result of individual choices or behaviors. **Programs that promote lasting mobility acknowledge the structural inequity that has allowed poverty to persist, and advance policy accordingly.**

Initial Policy Recommendations

The systemic problems Illinois faces in combating intergenerational poverty are monumental and cannot be addressed utilizing a typical approach to public policy and investment. State government and the safety-net programming it delivers have too often provided band-aid solutions that can ultimately perpetuate poverty rather than address root causes. The IWPEs recommends that Illinois ambitiously confront longstanding assumptions and restrictive belief systems that have held back progress or have led to limited, short term solutions.

In alignment with the mission, strategic principles, and goals of IWPEs, the Workgroup offers the following broad guidelines and suggested tactics for approaching this work. This will include an analysis of current systems that perpetuate poverty, identification of opportunities and barriers to poverty elimination, and development of public policies, regulatory reform, and collaborative programming that directly addresses intergenerational cycles of poverty.

- 1) Embrace an Equity Lens and Confront Systemic Racism and Institutional Discrimination
- 2) Address Economic Exclusion and Ensure Poverty Reduction Strategies are Accessible and Equitable
- 3) Build Infrastructure to Measure the Impact of Discriminatory Institutions, Track the Success of Poverty Interventions, and Identify Promising New Strategies
- 4) Engage in Collaborative Solutions Across Public and Private Sectors

Next Steps

- Launch Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security (December 2020)
- Hold at least 6 public hearings in different geographic regions of the State to collect information, take testimony, and solicit input from interested parties, including members of the public who have personal experiences with State programs and services (Winter and Spring 2020)
- IWPEs quarterly convening (January 2020)
- Commission shall develop and adopt a strategic plan (Spring 2021)

Overview of Poverty in Illinois

Defining poverty

The Intergenerational Poverty Act seeks to ensure that all Illinoisans who are born to lower-income households have a path out of poverty and experience intergenerational mobility. To that end, the Act defines the following terms related to poverty and economic insecurity:

- **Poverty** is defined as “an economic condition in which an individual or family has a total annual income that is less than the federal poverty level for the individual or family, as provided in the report of the United States Census Bureau on Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States.”
- **Deep poverty** is defined as “an economic condition where an individual or family has a total annual income that is less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level for the individual or family (...).”
- **Economic insecurity** “means the inability to cope with routine adverse or costly life events and recover from the costly consequences of those events and the lack of economic means to maintain an adequate standard of living.”
- **Intergenerational poverty** “means poverty in which two or more successive generations of a family continue in the cycle of poverty and government dependence.”

The Act also charges the newly established Commission with, among other activities, creating a **state poverty measure**, defined as “a uniform method for measuring poverty in this State that considers indicators and measures, other than traditional income-based measures of poverty, that provide a detailed picture of low-income and poverty populations and meaningfully account for other factors contributing to poverty (...).”

For the purposes of this report, the Workgroup used the Census Bureau’s federal poverty thresholds for 2018, defined as the dollar amount an individual or family unit needs to meet their basic needs. Table 1 below displays the federal poverty thresholds for a subset of family structures.

Table 1. Federal Poverty Thresholds for 2018

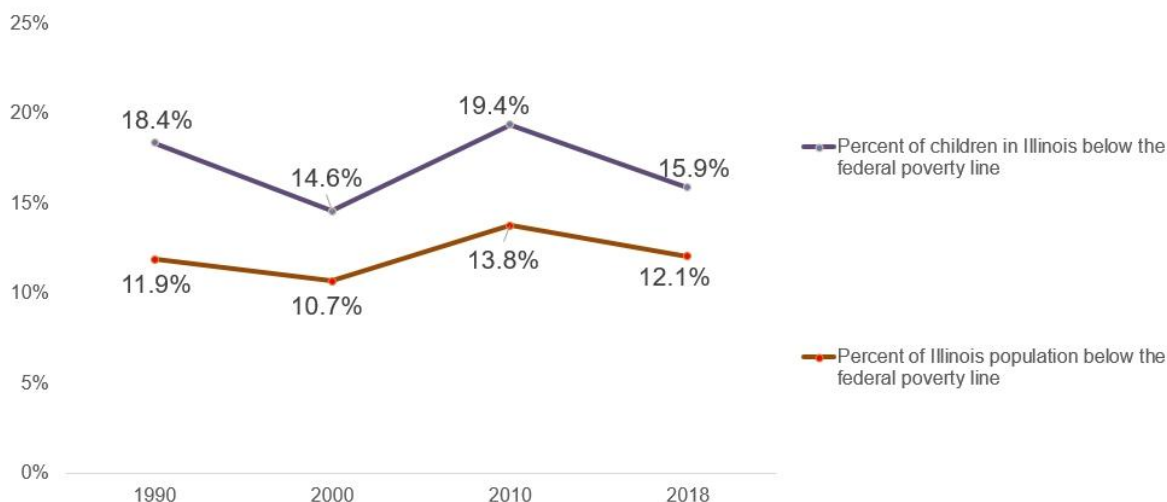
Family Size	Poverty Threshold (100%)
One person under 65 years of age	\$13,064
One person age 65 or older	\$12,043
Two: householder under 65 years of age, no related children	\$16,815
Two: householder age 65 or older, no related children	\$15,178
Three: including two related children	\$20,231
Four: including two related children	\$25,465

The US Census Bureau has not revised the federal poverty thresholds since their origination in the mid-1960s, and though they are adjusted annually to account for inflation, they do not account for changes in

living costs and standards¹. The thresholds also do not vary geographically despite variation in living costs across the country. Consequently, the federal poverty threshold provides an incomplete picture of how many Illinois residents are experiencing economic insecurity.

In 2018, 12.1 percent of Illinoisans experienced poverty (Figure 1). This number has not changed significantly over the last 30 years.

Figure 1. Percent of population below the federal poverty threshold



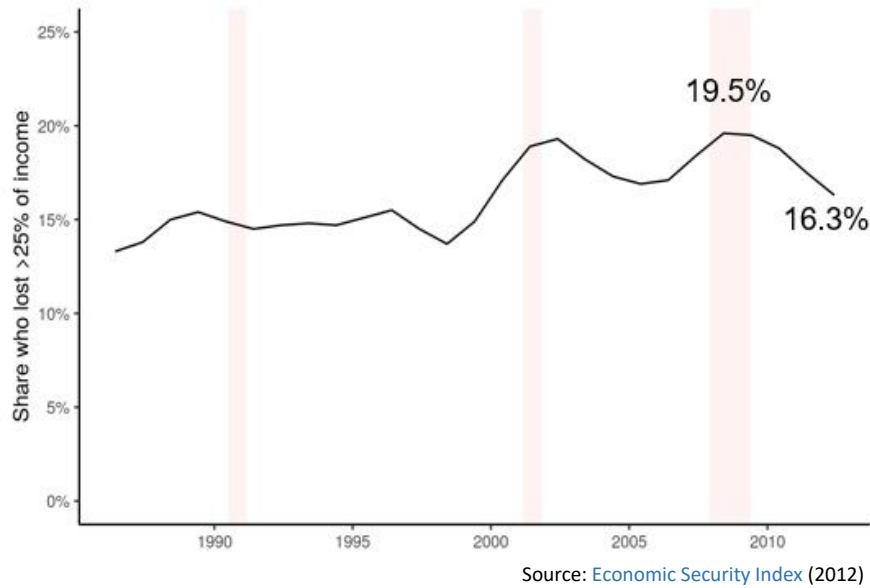
Source: For the percent of Illinois population: *Talk Poverty*, Center for American Progress (2019) and *Poverty, Income & Health Insurance Update*, Heartland Alliance (2018). For the percent of children in Illinois: *Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Center*. Report uses the Census Bureau's SAIPE data. Note that the exact percentage for 1990 was unavailable; the 18.4% is the 1989 percentage, which was the closest year of data available.

An alternative measure of economic insecurity is the Economic Security Index (ESI), developed by researchers at the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. The ESI represents the proportion of Americans who see their available household income decline by at least 25 percent in one year and lack sufficient savings to replace that lost income. Higher levels of ESI are associated with greater economic insecurity.

Figure 2 illustrates the ESI for Illinois since the 1980s. Economic insecurity in Illinois has generally peaked during economic downturns (represented by the pink vertical bars) and has generally trended upward over time. In 2008, nearly one in five Illinoisans experienced economic insecurity as measured by the ESI. Economic insecurity declined to 16.3 percent by 2012, the last year for which this index is available.

¹ The thresholds are based on the cost of a minimal food diet multiplied by three to account for other living expenses. Only adjusting for inflation assumes that over time, the growth in the cost of food is proportionate to the growth in the cost of all other living expenses, which has not proven to be the case. In fact, food comprised ten percent of an average family's expenses in 2019 compared to almost 30 percent in 1966 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; Johnson et al. 2001).

Figure 2. Rates of economic insecurity in Illinois over time

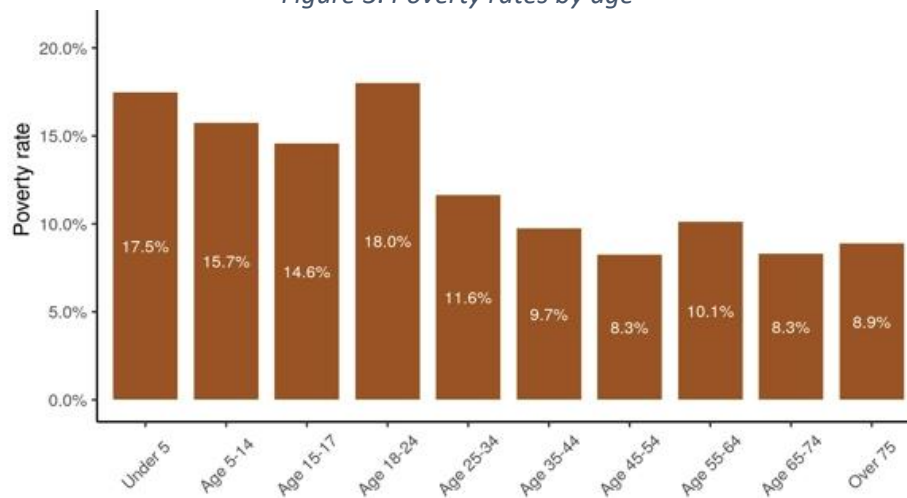


Who experiences poverty in Illinois

Children are more likely than adults to experience poverty in Illinois. Figure 1 above displays the poverty rate for children and for the overall population since 1990. While both figures have fluctuated over time in response to macroeconomic conditions and policy changes, children consistently experience poverty at higher rates than adults. For example, in 2018, 15.9 percent of children in Illinois experienced poverty, compared to 12.1 percent of Illinois residents overall.

Figure 3 presents a more fine-grained depiction of how the poverty rate varies by age. It shows emerging adults (ages 18 to 24) and very young children (under the age of five) are most likely to experience poverty. This fact is particularly salient given the critical developmental milestones facing young people in both age groups.

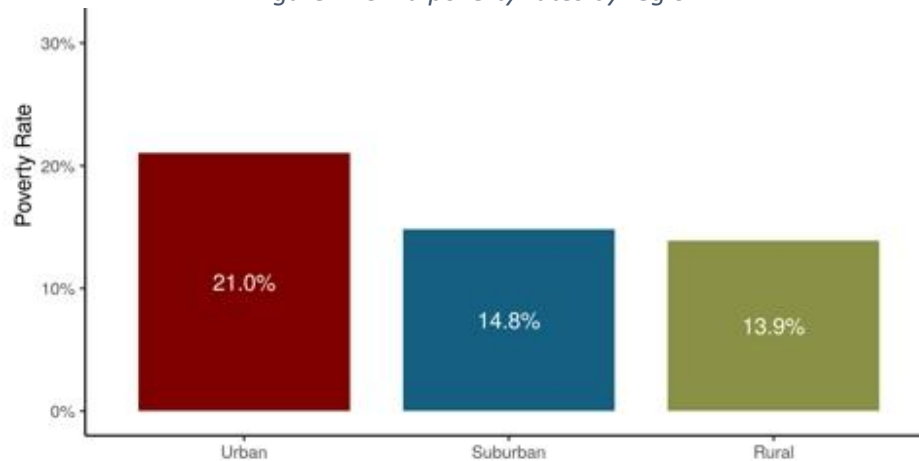
Figure 3. Poverty rates by age



Source: American Community Survey 2018

Poverty rates also vary by region. Illinoisans living in urban areas are most likely to experience poverty. Figure 4 highlights that more than one in five children living in urban areas experience poverty compared to one in seven children living in suburban areas and rural areas.

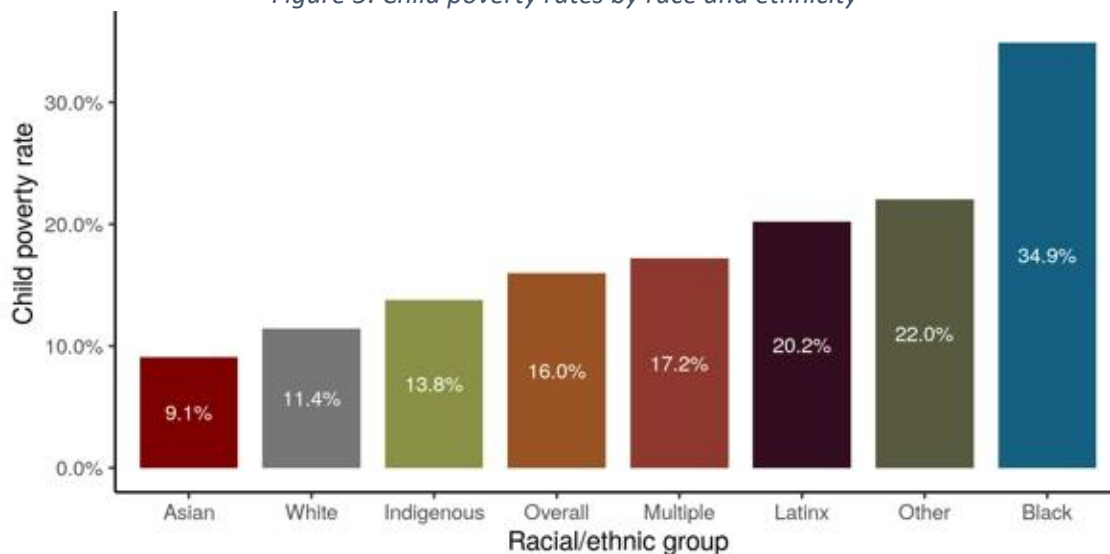
Figure 4. Child poverty rates by region



Source: 2018 American Community Survey. Regional classifications are derived from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural-Urban Continuum.

Racial disparities in child poverty are similarly concerning. Figure 5 shows that **more than one in three Black children experience poverty**. The child poverty rate for Black children is almost four times that of Asian children. Rates of child poverty in many ways tell the story of intergenerational poverty: 42 percent of children born to parents in the bottom fifth of the economic distribution remain there as adults (Fass et al., 2009).

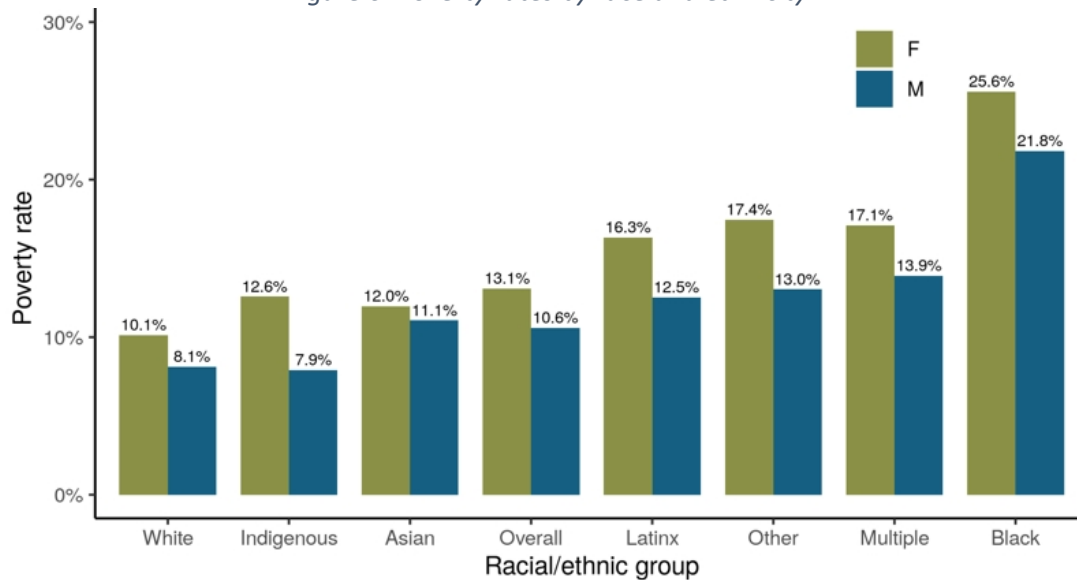
Figure 5. Child poverty rates by race and ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 2018

In Illinois, disparities in the overall poverty rate mirror child poverty rates. This analysis also reveals that women, regardless of race or ethnicity, experience poverty at higher rates than men. Especially astonishing is that **Black women are three times more likely to experience poverty than white men** (Figure 6).

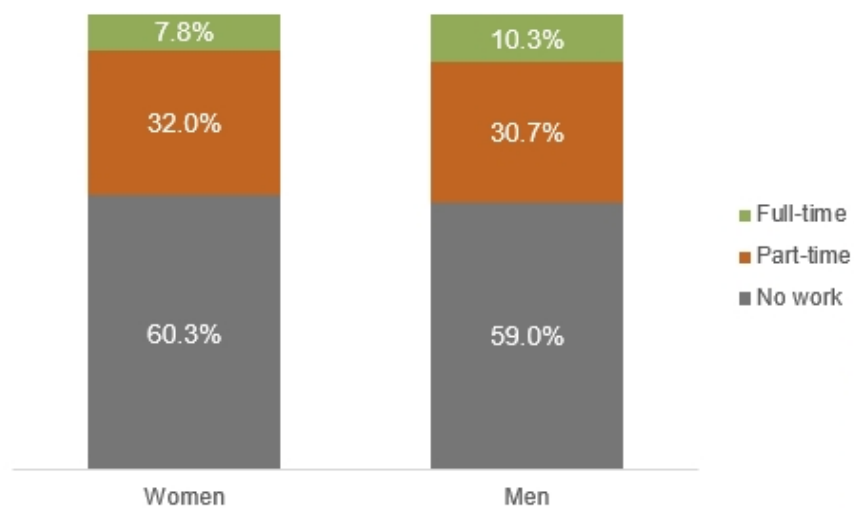
Figure 6. Poverty rates by race and ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 2018

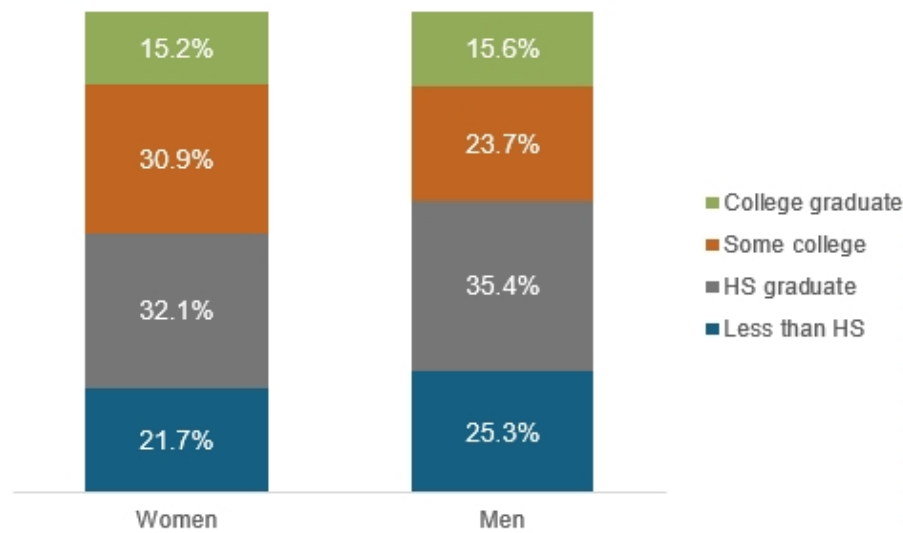
Many Illinoisans experiencing poverty are employed. Among working-age Illinoisans living in poverty, almost 40 percent are employed, with the majority working part-time (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Employment for working-age individuals living in poverty



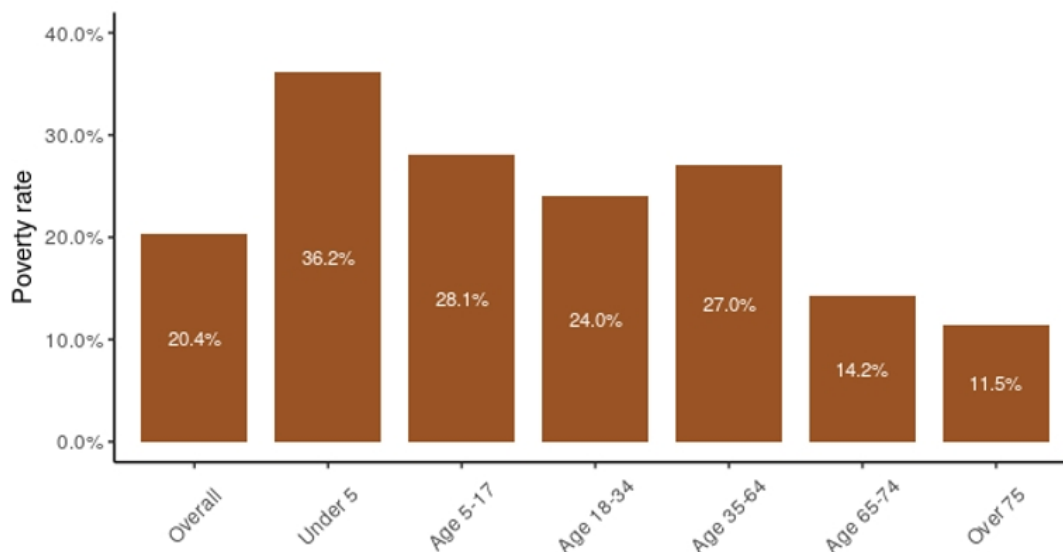
Source: American Community Survey 2018

About 45 percent of women and almost 40 percent of men experiencing poverty in Illinois have completed some college (Figure 8). Strikingly, more than one in seven Illinoisans experiencing poverty obtained a college degree.

Figure 8. Educational attainment for individuals experiencing poverty

Source: American Community Survey 2018

Finally, the Workgroup examined poverty rates for Illinoisans with disabilities. Overall, more than one in five Illinoisans with a disability experiences poverty, but children under five years of age are especially at risk (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Poverty rates for people with disabilities by age

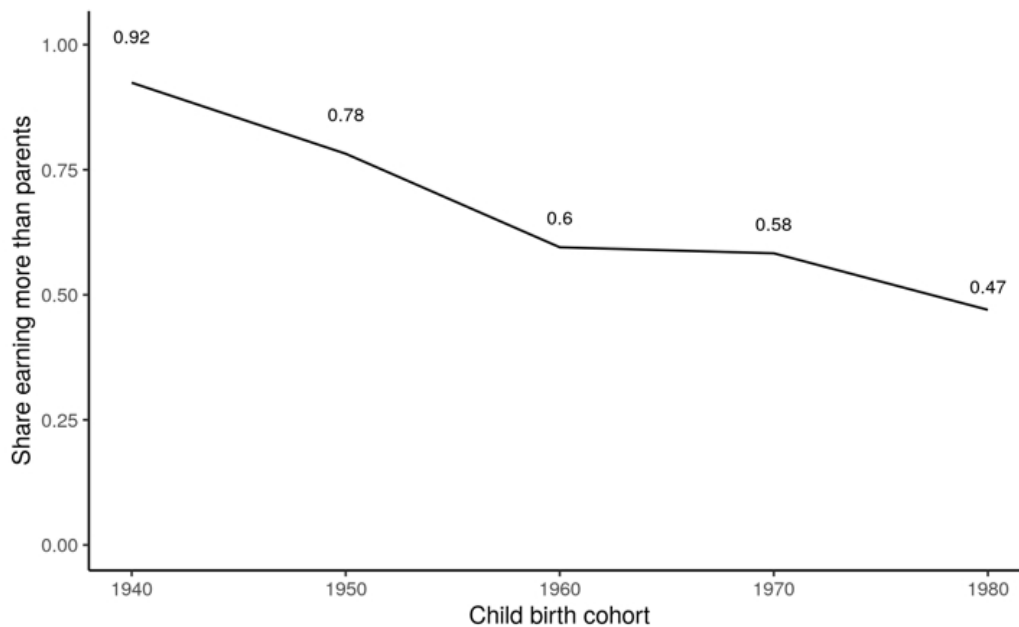
Source: American Community Survey 2018

Intergenerational mobility in Illinois

The focus of the Workgroup's authorizing legislation is squarely on intergenerational poverty, which, until recently, was difficult to study as it requires population-level, high-quality income data that can link children to their parents. However, recent research that utilizes de-identified federal income tax records for family units finds that the proportion of adults who earn more income than their parents has decreased over time (Chetty et al., 2017). Since 1940, the share of Illinois children earning more than their

parents has declined by almost 50 percent (Figure 9). Illinois is one of five states nationally that have experienced the largest declines in upward mobility.

Figure 10. Rates of Illinois children earning more than their parents



Source: Chetty et. al (2017)

Why intergenerational poverty exists

The Workgroup examined the existing research on the root causes of intergenerational poverty to offer policy recommendations that will effectively address the challenges Illinoisans face. The Workgroup finds that historical policies have incentivized white upward mobility and perpetuated Black downward mobility.

Robust federal spending in the mid-twentieth century ensured the creation of a white middle class, creating a legacy of wealth inequality for generations to come. Notable among these policies was the G.I. Bill, which awarded World War II veterans with low-cost mortgages and low-interest business loans for returning veterans. Though the bill was lauded as the first color-blind law in US history, the bill allowed each state to control the distribution of benefits with little federal oversight (Humes, 2006). This resulted in Black veterans receiving counseling to enroll in vocational programs or small and underfunded historically black colleges. Vocational programs and employers then prepared and hired Black veterans for less lucrative, nonskilled service roles. In the Deep South, the counselors refused to administer educational, employment, or housing benefits to Black veterans. This led to 12 percent of black veterans attending college on the G.I. bill compared to 28 percent of whites (Turner and Bound, 2003).

Though the GI bill is perhaps best known for its effect on homeownership, the Veterans Administration only served as a guarantor and not as a lender. Most lending institutions barred Black veterans from applying for a loan and even when they amassed enough savings to enter the real estate market, restrictive covenants and redlining denied them the opportunity to invest in high-value property. Despite the VA's presence as a guarantor, Black veterans and the neighborhoods to which they were confined were deemed too risky. Though the Supreme Court deemed these practices unconstitutional, housing

discrimination and school segregation persisted, accelerating community disinvestment. White homeownership rates surged to 66 percent in the postwar period and are now 75 percent, while Black and Latinx homeownership rates reached 40 percent after the war and have only risen to 50 percent (Humes, 2006). Homeownership is the largest contributor to wealth among U.S. households, but these exclusionary policies prevented Black veterans from experiencing the mobility their white counterparts enjoyed.

Because local property taxes are a primary source of revenue for public education, housing segregation has direct consequences for education funding. Nationally, school districts that serve predominantly Black, Latinx, and American Indian students receive approximately 13 percent less funding per student than districts serving fewer students of color (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018). Public school spending in Illinois, while comparable to that of other large states (e.g. California), has disproportionately favored children born to wealthier parents. One study linked disparate school funding in Illinois to lower rates of intergenerational mobility in the state (Kotera & Seshadri, 2017).

In recent years, policymakers have worked to increase access to college as a driver to improving social mobility. Indeed, research shows that college graduates, among a host of other benefits, are 3.5 times less likely to live in poverty (Trostel, 2015). However, the likelihood of graduating from college varies widely with family income, further illustrating the challenges faced by families working to achieve intergenerational mobility (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Individualistic explanations obscure policies that promoted downward mobility for people of color

In cities and regions with greater economic and racial inequality, social mobility is even more difficult to attain. Recent research suggests that changes in the economy (e.g., automation) have exacerbated economic segregation by stratifying neighborhoods by class and opportunity. These boundaries reinforce racial segregation, which is correlated with worse educational and life outcomes for children of color (Fogli & Guerrieri, 2019).

Chetty's analysis (2017) finds that increasing GDP does not improve intergenerational mobility because high-income earners benefit most from economic growth. As a rise in inequality is linked to less mobility, he argues that a return to the American Dream of children earning more than their parents will require more equal distribution of economic growth. Chetty's other studies find that high income mobility is correlated with high-quality K-12 education, family stability, lower income inequality, less residential segregation, and wider access to social capital (Chetty et al., 2014).

COVID-19 Impacts on poverty

COVID-19 has resulted in substantial fluctuations in the unemployment rate in Illinois. The state's unemployment rate increased from 4.2 percent in March of 2020 to 17.2 percent in April and declined to 11 percent by August. Unemployment puts more Illinoisans at risk of poverty and economic insecurity. Research suggests that a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate typically results in an increase in the poverty rate ranging from 0.4 to 0.7 percentage points (Hoyne et al., 2006). This implies that the poverty rate in Illinois may have risen anywhere from 2.8 to 4.9 percentage points over the last six months.

This increase in the overall poverty rate in Illinois will be experienced disproportionately by Black and Hispanic residents (Parolin & Wimer, 2020). Factors such as the racial wealth gap, occupational segregation, lower rates of health insurance coverage and access to employer paid sick leave all contribute to these disparities (McKernan et al., 2017; Maxwell & Solomon, 2020; Artiga et al., 2020; Gould & Wilson, 2020).

COVID-19 makes the Commission's goal of poverty elimination even more difficult, while increasing the demand for programs and policies to strengthen the social safety net and make Illinois' economy work for all.

Antipoverty Programs in Illinois

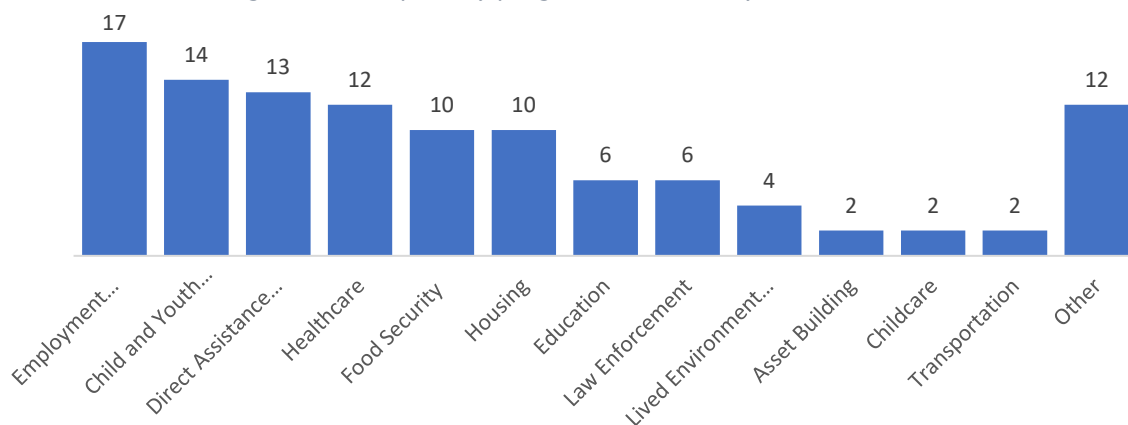
Overview

The Intergenerational Poverty Act requires the Workgroup to routinely evaluate the effectiveness of policies, procedures, and programs whose goals include the reduction of intergenerational poverty in Illinois. For this Workgroup's purposes, an antipoverty program is defined as a program that is targeted to low-income communities or that has income or asset limits for participants.

In September 2020, the Workgroup conducted an online survey of State agencies to identify existing efforts to end intergenerational poverty. This inventory captured details on program benefits, services and resources provided to program participants, target populations, and conditions for participation. The results of this survey are summarized below. These results do not offer a comprehensive assessment of programs in Illinois, as the Workgroup was not able to obtain responses from all agencies.

The inventory asked survey respondents to categorize antipoverty programs using a taxonomy of issue areas. The inventory shows that State departments operate a diverse array of antipoverty programs and identified **84 existing programs** operated by 13 agencies across **19 issue areas**. **Employment, child and youth development, and direct assistance programs** are the most common types of antipoverty programs².

Figure 11. Antipoverty programs in Illinois by issue area



² The Workgroup did not collect data on funding allocations for each of these programs, but the healthcare category likely surpasses any other issue area due to expenditures on Medicaid and Medicare.

The inventory also asked respondents to identify secondary issue areas for each program. For example, the Illinois Housing Development Authority's Down Payment Assistance Program is a housing program but also a direct assistance program. The purpose of this is to capture the multiple needs an antipoverty program may address. Antipoverty programs focused on **child and youth development, healthcare, and housing** are most likely to intersect with other issue areas.

The 66 antipoverty programs captured in the inventory have varying eligibility criteria. Some programs are designed to supplement a federal benefit, while others provide a benefit to those who do not meet federal eligibility criteria but demonstrate need. The following sections provide additional detail on the programs within each issue area.

Employment, Wages, and Economic Opportunity

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Revenue, IDHS, IDOC, and State Treasurer's Office	17	Asset building; child and youth development; law enforcement

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **employment, wages, and economic opportunity** are: *Aftercare Supervision, all educational and vocational programming offered by IDOC and its partners, Apprenticeship Illinois, Ceasefire, Chicago CRED, the Community Service Block Grant program, Day Reporting Centers, IDHS Workforce Development, the Illinois Earned Income Credit, the Illinois Higher Education Savings Program Fund, Illinois WorkNet, Teen Parent Services, Unemployment Insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA Works Illinois, the Youth Advocate Project, and Youth Build.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Assessment of children’s needs and potential supports •Connection to community services and workforce development opportunities for youth discharged from juvenile justice system involvement •Help for the elderly and those with disabilities to maintain self-sufficiency •Long-term ombudsmen •Prevention of the abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of people with disabilities •Provision of assistance to promote self-sufficiency •Provision of down payment, energy/utility bill, cash/food, rental assistance •Provision of permanent housing •Supports for children and their families •Teaching of construction skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bill payment assistance •Direct cash assistance •Energy efficiency counseling/education •In-home/household task assistance •In-kind assistance •Investigations •Personalized case management •Support, coaching, and mentoring •Training/development •Financial literacy •Workforces skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Youth (0-19) •Adults (20-65) •Seniors (65+) •Families with children •Homeowners •Immigrants and refugees •Individuals experiencing homelessness •Individuals with disabilities •Residents of long-term care facilities and their families/staff/administrators •Low-income households •Recipients of public benefits •Specific geographies/regions •Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice •Engagement with case worker •Experience or risk of homelessness •Geographic regions •Income eligibility •Having a disability •Medicaid enrollment •Meeting of income and mortgage terms •Non-citizen •Plan for self-sufficiency •Pregnant/have child under 19 •U.S. citizenship

Child and Youth Development

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Revenue, IDHS, IDOC, ISBE, and Lt. Governor's Office	14	Childcare; education; employment, wages, and economic opportunity; food security, healthcare, housing, law enforcement, lived environment and community development, and transportation

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **child and youth development** are: *the Advanced Placement Course Implementation Grant, the Career and Technical Education Program, the Early Intervention Program, the Illinois Earned Income Credit, Inside Out Dads, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program, parenting programs for women, the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Initiative, the STEAM grant, the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Support Waiver Program for Children and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Teen Parent Services, TANF, and USDA School-Based Nutrition Programs.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP coursework and CTE for low-income students • Educational supports • EITC expansion • Family stability • Family reunification, communication/parenting improvements • Removal of barriers for homeless students • Nutrition programs • Funding for programs (civil legal aid, youth development, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking classes/ grocery provision • Direct cash assistance • Grants • In-home/household task assistance • Personalized case management • Training/ development • Reimbursements for schools • Subsidies • Support/coaching/ mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants to preschool children (0-5) • Children and Youth (0-19) • Adults (20-65) • Families with children • Individuals experiencing homelessness • Individuals with disabilities • Low-income students • LGBTQIA+ individuals • Recipients of public benefits • School districts • Women (esp. breastfeeding/ pregnant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under age 3 displaying developmental delay • Competitive grant application • CTE educators and students • Geographic region • Group attendance • Homelessness • Income guidelines • Plan for self-sufficiency • Pregnant/have child under 19 • School participation • SSN numbers for every family member • U.S. citizenship

Direct Assistance, Tax/Debt Relief, and Financial Reform

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Aging, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, IDHS, and IHDA	13	Asset building; child and youth development; energy efficiency; food security, health and safety; housing; and lived environment and community development

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **direct assistance, tax/debt relief, and financial reform** are: *the Adult Protective Services Program, the Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Aid to the Aged, Blind or Disabled (AABD Cash), downpayment assistance programs, the Home Accessibility Program, the Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Permanent Supportive Housing Financing, Rental Housing Support Program, Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Services for Non-Citizen Victims of Trafficking, Torture and Other Serious Crimes (VTTC), Support Waiver Program for Children and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities, and TANF.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Assessment of children's needs and potential supports •Help for the elderly and those with disabilities to maintain self-sufficiency •Long-term ombudsmen •Prevention of the abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of people with disabilities •Provision of down payment, energy/utility bill, cash/food, rental assistance •Provision of permanent housing •Supports for children and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bill payment assistance •Direct cash assistance •Energy efficiency counseling/education •In-home/household task assistance •In-kind assistance •Investigations •Personalized case management •Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adults (20-65) •Seniors (65+) •Families with children •Homeowners •Immigrants and refugees •Individuals experiencing homelessness •Individuals with disabilities •Residents of long-term care facilities and their families/ staff/ administrators •Low-income households •Recipients of public benefits •Specific geographies/regions •Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engagement with case worker •Experience or risk of homelessness •Income eligibility •Having a disability •Medicaid enrollment •Meeting of income and mortgage terms •Non-citizen •Plan for self-sufficiency •Pregnant/have child under 19 •U.S. citizenship

Healthcare

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Aging, Healthcare and Family Services, and ISBE	12	Childcare; child and youth development; food security; housing; and transportation

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **healthcare** are: *the Affordable Care Act for Adults, Aid to Aged Blind and Disabled (AABD) Medical, the Community Care Program, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Former Foster Care, FamilyCare/ All Kids, HFS Medical Benefits, the Illinois Free Lunch and Breakfast Program, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program, the Senior Health Assistance Program (SHAP), USDA Child Nutrition Programs (the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program), and Veterans Care.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable health insurance • Emergency medical home response • Funding for school districts to provide healthy meals • Healthcare coverage expansion • Healthy meals for children • In-home care/community services • Protection against unforeseen medical costs/economic shocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling • Emergency response • In-home/household task assistance • In-kind assistance • Personalized case management • Reimbursement to community-based organizations that provide healthy meals to children • Technical assistance • Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants to preschool children (0-5) • Children and youth (0-19) • Adults (20-65) • Seniors (65+) • Families with children • Individuals with disabilities • Recipients of public benefits • Veterans • Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual applications • Assessment of the need for long-term care • Homelessness • Income eligibility • Illinois residency • Lack of health insurance • Non-citizen filing or preparing to file an application for legal status, registering for employment, and attending English classes/job skills training • School or work participation • SNAP benefit recipient • U.S. citizenship or qualified immigration status

Food Security

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Aging, Department of Agriculture, IDHS, and ISBE	10	Childcare; child and youth development; direct assistance, tax/debt relief, and financial reform; healthcare, and transportation

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **food security** are: *Experimental System's "double value" LINK program, Home-Delivered Meals and Group Site Meals, the Illinois Free Lunch and Breakfast Program, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program, operation of the Illinois Products Farmers' Market, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) Program, the USDA Child Nutrition Program (Summer Food Service Program), USDA School-Based Nutrition Programs, VTTC, and WIC.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to food for the most vulnerable populations • Additional funds to school districts for healthy meals • Cash/food assistance of non-citizens • Encouragement of SNAP participants to purchase local and fresh food • Provision of healthy meals to low-income children • Provision of nutrition to older persons, allowing them to stay in their homes • Removal of barriers for homeless children to have a successful education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking classes/grocery provision • Direct cash assistance • Funding • Healthy meals • Matching of SNAP funds • Personalized case management • Reimbursements to schools and community organizations • Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants to preschool children (0-5) • Children and youth (0-19) • Seniors (65+) • Immigrants and refugees • Recipients of public benefits • Women (breastfeeding or pregnant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual applications • Homelessness • Income eligibility • Non-citizen filing or preparing to file an application for legal status, registering for employment, and attending English classes/job skills training • School or work participation • SNAP benefit recipient

Housing

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, IDHS, IHDA, and ISBE	10	Childcare; child and youth development; direct assistance, tax/debt relief, and financial reform; food security; lived environment and community development; and transportation

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **housing** are: *the Community Development Block Grants, downpayment assistance programs, the Home Accessibility Program, homeless prevention, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program, Multifamily Housing Financing through LIHTC and other funding, Permanent Supportive Housing Financing, the Rental Housing Support Program, and Single Family Rehabilitation.*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services • Down payment assistance • Financing of affordable rental housing units • Grants for low-moderate-income communities • Housing repair cost assistance • Provision of funding for in-home modifications to keep a person with a disability in their home • Provision of permanent housing • Removal of barriers to ensure homeless children have a successful education • Removal of barriers to self-sufficiency • Rental assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Direct cash assistance • In-kind assistance • Personalized case management • Training/development • Upgrades to water treatment facilities in low-moderate-income communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants to preschool children (0-5) • Children and youth (0-19) • Adults (20-65) • Seniors (65+) • Families with or without children • Homeowners • Individuals experiencing homelessness • Individuals with disabilities • Low-income households/communities • Recipients of public benefits • Specific geographies or regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience or risk of homelessness • Having a disability • Income eligibility • Meeting of income and mortgage terms • Specific geographies

Education

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Juvenile Justice and ISBE	6	Child and youth development; client advocacy and mentoring; and vocational training

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **education** are: *the Advanced Placement Course Implementation Grant, the Advanced Placement Test Fee Waiver Program, Aftercare Supervision, College of DuPage courses, Lake Land Community College vocational courses, and School District 428*. See below for more details:

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Connection to community services for youth who are discharged from juvenile justice system involvement •Education provided in accordance with ISBE standards •Equipment of youth for success as adults, including in the workforce •Exposure to college campuses •Grant funding for school districts to start or expand AP for low-income students •Reduced AP Seminar and AP exam fees for public school students who qualify •Vocational training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •6th-12th grade education •Case management and supervision •Grants •Low-income qualifying fee reduction •Provision of targeted vocational training in a college course format (i.e. custodial maintenance, construction, horticulture, and culinary arts) •Provision of two semesters with 10 credit hours per semester of introductory level college courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Children and youth (0-19) •Adults (age 20) •Low-income secondary school students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice (some programs require a high school diploma/eligibility for dual-credit courses, others require a lack of a high school diploma) •Geographic region (location being held) •Income eligibility •LEA qualification with 40% or more low-income student base •Participation in AP programs

Law Enforcement

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
IDOC and Lt. Governor's Office	6	Asset building; child and youth development; employment, wages, and economic opportunity; and lived environment and community development

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **law enforcement** are: *all educational and vocational programming offered by IDOC and partners, Building Change, Inside Out Dads, parenting programs for women, R3, and Thinking for a Change (men)/Moving On (women).*

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cognitive behavioral-based programming with a focus on communication and life/social skills •Enhancement of attendees' educational and vocational futures through various class levels •Funding for support in activities like civil legal aid, economic development, reentry, violence prevention, and youth development •Improvement of family reunification and parenting skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Grants •Personalized case management •Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Children and youth (0-19) •Adults (20-65) •Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Geographical requirements •Group attendance •Group participation •School participation

Lived Environment and Community Development

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
IHDA and Lt. Governor's Office	4	Child and youth development; direct assistance, tax/debt relief, and financial reform; housing; and law enforcement

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **lived environment and community development** are: *Multifamily Housing Financing*, *Permanent Supportive Housing Financing*, *Single Family Rehabilitation*, and *R3*. See below for more details:

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Financing of affordable rental housing units •Funding for support in activities like civil legal aid, economic development, reentry, violence prevention, and youth development •Housing repair cost assistance •Provision of permanent housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Affordable housing •Direct cash assistance •Grants •In-kind assistance •Personalized case management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Children and Youth (0-19) •Adults (20-65) •Families with or without children •Homeowners •Individuals experiencing homelessness •Recipients of public benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Geographical requirements •Income eligibility

Asset Building

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
IDOC and IHDA	2	Direct assistance, tax/debt relief, and financial assistance; employment, wages, and economic opportunity; housing; and law enforcement

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **asset building** are *all educational and vocational programming offered by IDOC and its partners and the Rental Housing Support Program*. See below for more details:

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of attendees' educational and vocational futures through various levels of classes • Provision of rental assistance through local agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind assistance • Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific geographies/regions • Adults (20-65 years old) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income (30% AMI) • School participation

Childcare

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
IDHS and ISBE	2	Child and youth development; food security; healthcare, housing, and transportation

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **childcare** are *the child care program* and *the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program*. See below for more details:

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Childcare subsidies for working parents/those attending training •Removal of barriers to ensure that homeless children have a successful education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Training/development •Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Based on income •Infants to preschool children (0-5) •Children and Youth (0-19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Homelessness •School/training/work participation

Transportation

Agencies	Number of Programs	Overlapping Issue Areas
Department of Aging and ISBE	2	Childcare; child and youth development; food security, healthcare; and housing

The antipoverty programs in this inventory related to **transportation** are *the Benefit Access Program for Seniors* and *the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant Program*. See below for more details:

Short- and long-term benefits	Services/resources provided	Target populations	Conditions for participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of free transit and license plate discount for seniors and persons with disabilities • Removal of barriers to ensure homeless children have a successful education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounted state service • In-kind assistance • Training/development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants to preschool children (0-5) • Children and Youth (0-19) • Seniors (65+) • Individuals with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved benefits access application • Homelessness

Other Issue Areas

The inventory captured details about eighteen programs that respondents could not classify using the taxonomy offered in the survey. Details about these programs are provided below.

The State Board of Education administers the *ERate Matching Grant*, which addresses the issue area of **internet access** and provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in obtaining affordable Internet access. These discounts range from 20 percent to 90 percent of the costs of eligible services, depending on the level of poverty and the urban/rural status of the population served. To receive this funding, local school districts must complete an online form and secure local matching funds.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity operates the *Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program*, which addresses the issue area of **energy efficiency** and provides energy-saving investments and counseling to low-income households through Community Action Agencies. The reduction of energy bills improves the health and safety of households. There are no conditions for participation.

The Department of Juvenile Justice administers the *Youth Advocate Project*, which addresses the issue area of **client advocacy and mentoring with a focus on employment** for youth to succeed in Aftercare Supervision and in life as responsible adults. It provides support, coaching, and mentoring for any youth committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice who return to their designated communities.

Additionally, the Department of Juvenile Justice operates programming that addresses the issue areas of **independent living skills and life skills**. These programs include: *the Aftercare Transition Program, Day Reporting Centers, mental health services, and multi-systemic therapy for emerging adults*. The short- and long-term benefits to participants include the teaching of essential skills to succeed in life and strong support networks through connections to community services. To be eligible for program participation, participants must be youth who are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Some programs are for youth who have a mental health or substance abuse diagnosis.

Following this, the Department of Juvenile Justice has programming that addresses the issue areas of **mental health and substance use/abuse**. These programs *are the Co-occurring Disorders Treatment Program, Day Reporting Centers, mental health services, multi-systemic therapy for emerging adults, and substance use prevention and recovery services*. These programs provide youth with the skills to cope with stress and life challenges without abusing substances and connections to other community supports and services. To be eligible for program participation, participants must be youth who are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice and who have a mental health or substance abuse diagnosis.

Moreover, the Department of Juvenile Justice has a program on the issue area of **trauma**. It is *structured psychotherapy for adolescents responding to chronic stress* and aims to equip youth, ages 13-20, with the skills to cope with chronic stress and trauma. It provides support, coaching, and mentoring to program participants who are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Furthermore, the Department of Juvenile Justice administers various programs that address the issue area of **vocational training and skills development**. The programs offered include: *Aftercare Supervision, Barber College vocational courses, Lake Land Community College vocational courses, the Technology and Manufacturing Association's computerized tool and die training, and Youth Build*. These programs provide

targeted vocational training with access to job opportunities at program completion. Aftercare Supervision also provides case management and supervision to program participants. To be eligible for these programs, participants must be between the ages of 13-20 (with different minimum age requirements for different programs) and committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Some programs require that program participants have a high school diploma or are eligible for dual-credit courses.

Lastly, the Department of Juvenile Justice provides two antipoverty programs that address the issue area of **violence reduction**. These programs are *Ceasefire* and *Chicago CRED*. Both programs connect youth who are committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice to workforce development opportunities and provide youth with training, support, coaching, and mentoring.

Policy implications of Theories of Poverty

Overview

Poverty alleviation policies are frequently motivated by one or more underlying assumptions about who experiences poverty and why it persists (Bradshaw, 2007; Guetzkow, 2010). Sociologist Ted Bradshaw offers a conceptual framework that categorizes existing literature on poverty into five broad theories, which are summarized in Table 2 below. The Workgroup examined the following in conjunction with the antipoverty program inventory.

Table 2. Bradshaw's theories of poverty

Theory	What causes poverty?	Related strategies
Individual/behavioral	Inherent deficiencies (e.g. laziness), bad choices, poor work ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional or personal development trainings that emphasize certain values, i.e. hard work or entrepreneurship Punitive welfare policies (e.g. time cut-offs, linking school attendance to benefits eligibility)
"Culture" of poverty	Family transmission of deficient behaviors and values; intergenerational dependency on public assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acculturation Head Start, after-school programs designed for specific "subcultures" More broadly strategies billed as "community uplift" and "urban renewal"
Structural barriers to mobility	Discriminatory economic, political, and social systems perpetuate stratification; these same systems disincentivize mobility for certain groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic focus on increased wages and benefits Advocacy for <i>better</i> jobs, not how to get <i>any</i> job Increased school funding Creating new, restitutive institutions (e.g. community-owned banks)
Regional/geographic	Adds a regional and spatial lens to structural theories; "space is not a backdrop for capitalism, <i>but rather is restructured by it</i> and contributes to the system's survival" (Shaw 1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate competition in local industry through "cluster development" Affordable housing Investment in infrastructure i.e. highways, parks, water, waste disposal, etc.

Cumulative/ cyclical	Poverty is a mutually dependent relationship between “individual situations and lack of community resources”; builds on Structural Barriers theory to link structural barriers to negative outcomes throughout the life course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Deep and wide” social supports • UBI and other cash transfer programs • “Asset-based” instead of “deficit-based” social supports
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Table adapted from Figure 1., pg. 10, Bradshaw (2007)

The culture of poverty’s pervasive impact on antipoverty programs

The individual and “culture of poverty” theories have dominated much of our understanding of poverty and the programs designed to reduce it (O’Connor, 2001; Guetzkow, 2010; Branch and Scherer, 2013). Individual and behavioral theories of poverty find root causes in individual deficiencies that prevent an individual from achieving social mobility. Building on individualistic theories of poverty, the “culture of poverty” theory argues that the individual behaviors which perpetuate poverty are transmitted through families and communities over time, creating a “culture” through which the actions of individuals experiencing poverty can be explained.

By blaming the poor for their perceived moral decline, the culture theory made an argument against continued investment in antipoverty strategies. Many antipoverty policy features designed to prevent so-called dependency in fact discourage the self-sufficiency that deters long-term use of benefits. **Time and asset limits, as well as eligibility restrictions, produce a “churning effect”** wherein families cycle in and out of extreme poverty. These restrictions create **“benefits cliffs”**: families must demonstrate enough poverty to qualify but risk complete loss of benefits due to accrual of savings or a marginal increase in income (Albelda and Carr, 2017; Wood et. al, 2018; Camardelle, 2019; Aspen Institute, 2020).

Moving beyond the culture of poverty

The bulk of Illinois’ antipoverty programs seek to address poverty from an individual and culture of poverty perspective. Less frequently has the state engaged in removing structural barriers to mobility such as increasing school funding. The state does engage in antipoverty programs that utilize the regional/geographic theory of poverty, particularly in the area of housing assistance. However, additional investments in community infrastructure such as energy and internet access could play a larger role in the future.

The final theory depicts poverty as a negative cycle of decline between community resources and individual responses. For example, chronic unemployment in a neighborhood leads to outmigration and declining economic activity and revenues, resulting in less resources for public services such as schools, a lack of skilled labor, and eventual difficulties recruiting new businesses to the area. In this theory, poverty is the result of several linked phenomena occurring at both the structural and individual levels (Bradshaw, 2007). **Antipoverty programs then, need to be comprehensive, complex, and operate at multiple levels.** The 2019 Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine comes to a similar conclusion. The Roadmap shows that singular policies will not reduce child poverty by 50 percent in ten years, but a package of work-oriented and income-support programs would achieve that ambitious goal³.

³ Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, housing voucher program, and SNAP could reduce child poverty by 51.7 percent and add over 400,000 low-income workers at a cost of 90.7

Finally, it is imperative that antipoverty policies rely on the experiences of constituents themselves. Knowledge of poverty—even in quantitative data, which is often assumed to be objective—is not ideologically neutral (Katz, 1997; O'Connor, 2004). Antipoverty efforts should acknowledge that Americans living in poverty, while faced with structural challenges which make their upward mobility difficult, nonetheless bear the “skills necessary to forge their own self-liberation” (Harvey and Reed, 1996). In Bradshaw’s framework, **antipoverty strategies in line with a cyclical theory acknowledge the strengths, not the deficiencies, of individuals living in poverty.**

Initial Recommendations

As Bradshaw’s theories highlight, it is harmful to rely on assumptions that inaccurately characterize the experience of those living in poverty. Such assumptions lead to inadequate policy solutions that do very little to enable significant economic growth or accumulation of wealth over time. The IWPEs recognizes that the solution to poverty lies in analysis of the complex nature of poverty and the ways that economic, political, and social systems perpetuate wealth stratification and impair the mobility of certain groups. As a result, all aspects of this work must focus on challenging systems that perpetuate poverty. Such an approach will require bold action and a willingness to confront assumptions and the institutions that support them.

In response, IWPEs recommends an overall approach that focuses on structural barriers to mobility and the cumulative, cyclical effects of those structures. IWPEs will address the multitude of systems and institutions that perpetuate economic inequality, by investing in strategies that bring vitality to communities and help individuals accumulate assets and resources that can provide economic security for generations to come. In contrast to developing policies focused on individual inadequacies, IWGP will promote the development of asset-based social support programs.

Foundational to this approach will be ensuring that our response is centered in the experiences of the community and led by those who have experienced systemic poverty. IWPEs will work to avoid assumptions in policy making that are not informed by lived experience by including individuals who have experienced poverty in our decision making, consistently soliciting feedback through community forums, and partnering with community agencies, faith-based groups, and other trusted community leaders.

The following broad guidelines and suggested tactics will serve as a foundational starting point for this work. As the Working Group and the Poverty Commission engage in this endeavor, we anticipate our tactics will evolve as we expose and breakdown the multitude of inequities that perpetuate intergenerational poverty in the State of Illinois.

1) Embrace an Equity Lens and Confront Systemic Racism and Institutional Discrimination

Tactics:

- a. *Align with Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Planning Efforts*
- b. *Review and Revise Regulatory Policies and Practices that Disproportionately Burden Communities of Color*
- c. *Address Disinvestment in Communities of Color*

billion dollars. Another package consisting of an expanded EITC and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, higher minimum wage, child allowance, child support assurance, and the lifting of immigration eligibility restrictions could also reduce child poverty by 52.3 percent and add 611,000 low-income workers at a cost of \$109 billion.

Approach: Racism, gender discrimination, and mistreatment of individuals with disabilities is deeply rooted in American culture due to hundreds of years of racist and discriminatory policies, many of which remain active and destructive today. The effects of long-standing inequity linger and perpetuate disparities in poverty, housing, criminal justice, and healthcare, among other areas. Advancing equity requires the Workgroup to immerse itself in an understanding of this reality and look critically at current systems that perpetuate racist and discriminatory practices. Moreover, it demands that poverty solutions be designed to account for this history of institutional barriers.

The Workgroup will intentionally pursue an antiracist, restorative approach to equity and racial justice that reflects the diversity of the people we serve. As a starting point, we will leverage work being done at agencies throughout the State to develop diversity and inclusion plans that will transform institutional policy and practice. In addition, we know that historically racist and discriminatory systems are perpetuated under current state policy. Members of the IWGP will look closely to identify inequities within the regulations that govern State services, and revise rules where possible to eliminate inequity.

2) Address Economic Exclusion and Ensure Poverty Reduction Strategies are Accessible and Equitable

Tactics:

- *Increase Access to Capital and Enable Asset Accumulation*
- *Promote Financial Inclusion and Consumer Protections*
- *Streamline Eligibility and Enrollment in Social Support Programs*
- *Eliminate Benefit Cliffs*
- *Design Programming to Support Those Excluded from Traditional Benefits Systems (Immigrants and other disenfranchised groups)*
- *Examine Additional Opportunities for Support Through the Tax Structure*
- *Support Workers Through Wages, Worker Protections, and Flexible Family Policies*

Approach: Economic exclusion is a multidimensional process in which particular groups are prevented from participating fully and equally in the economic life of a community. This exclusion is often the result of public and private structural forces that perpetuate disadvantage and privilege (Greene, Pendall, Scott, and Lei, 2016). Disparate educational outcomes, inadequate labor and wage conditions, low levels of property ownership, and other wealth inequities are all symptoms of exclusion. It is essential to confront the structures that underlie economic exclusion in order break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. This work includes confronting systems that have prevented asset accumulation as well as preventing predatory consumer practices that keep families in debt.

Even well-established anti-poverty programs can perpetuate economic exclusion. For example, eligibility and enrollment in Illinois safety-net support programs can be confusing, disjointed, and administratively burdensome. Residents who qualify in the State absorb the impact of these challenges and can be deterred from enrolling into benefit programs for which they are eligible. IWGES recognizes the value of effectively coordinating enrollment in multiple health and human services programs that serve overlapping populations. Doing so increases program participation and retention among eligible residents.

Moreover, we know that certain communities, particularly immigrant and undocumented populations, have been disenfranchised from many traditional benefit systems. The rate at which non-citizens have used public benefit programs is less than that of U.S.-born citizens, even while these individuals pay into the system throughout their working life. At the same time, poverty disproportionately impacts immigrants. One-quarter of first-generation and 22 percent of second-generation immigrant children live in poverty, compared with 17 percent of non-immigrant children ([Child Trends, 2018](#)). Recognizing these gaps, IWPEs will ensure the policy solutions we propose are inclusive and supportive of all state residents, regardless of background.

3) Build Infrastructure to Measure the Impact of Discriminatory Institutions, Track the Success of Poverty Interventions, and Identify Promising New Strategies

Tactics:

- *Build Statewide Data System That Can Track Intergenerational Poverty Longitudinally*
- *Identify Opportunities to Improve and Increase Access to Current Poverty Programs*
- *Examine Traditionally Overlooked Systems That Perpetuate Poverty (ex. Broadband Access, Utilities, Environmental Justice)*
- *Employ Community-Engaged Research to Formulate New Poverty Interventions That Respond to Community Need*

Approach: State programs that impact the poor span over nearly every State agency and touch on multiple social structures from education, to finance, to homeownership, to employment, to food and healthcare access. In Illinois, there is a desire to track the impact of programs over time to better understand what policy decisions impact economic mobility. Effective evaluation of program impact will require working across government agencies to ensure data is aligned and can be collected in a way that supports a comprehensive view of the experience of poverty over time. The IWPEs will support this work, through an investment in data systems and feedback mechanisms spanning multiple program areas across the state.

IWPEs will also examine critical gaps where current poverty programs do not address existing and emerging threats to economic security. As we face compounding environmental effects of climate change and as technology continues to advance, we must ensure that our poor and disadvantaged communities are not further marginalized. Inequality perpetuated by both environmental threats and the “digital divide” can cause the disadvantaged groups to suffer disproportionately, resulting in greater subsequent inequality. IWPEs will focus on identifying and addressing these underappreciated threats that may compound poverty in the future.

IWPEs will combine these learnings with a comprehensive review of promising poverty strategies to pinpoint innovative new programming that can be effectively deployed in Illinois. Development of new strategies will require community-engagement to inform program structure and to ensure adequate reach. Principles of community-engaged research will be essential to ensuring our that the investments we make in new programing are designed by the people who are most likely to be affected.

4) Engage in Collaborative Solutions Across Public and Private Sectors

Tactics:

- *Work on Multiagency Initiatives and Improve Efficiency of Programs Across Government*
- *Build Community Networks That Can Propel Participation in Poverty Supports*
- *Leverage Private Innovation and Investment to Maximize Impact*

Approach: IWPES embraces the idea of cross sector collaboration, where representatives from government, non-profit, philanthropy, and business sectors use their diverse perspectives and resources to contribute toward meaningful poverty solutions. At the IWPES table sits department heads from across State Government who will work together to ensure other agencies are informed and engaged in policies that impact shared constituencies. In addition, they will act as champions of strategies identified by the Commission and the Working Group that will require collaboration across multiple departments.

IWPES recognizes that the fabric of our safety-net lies in the community providers who reach the residents who utilize services every day. We understand that they can provide essential insights into the needs of the community and are often best equipped to reach those in need. Therefore, IWPES will work with community-based organizations to both design and implement the policy solutions we deploy.

Finally, IWPES understands the power that partnering with philanthropy and the private sector can have in advancing innovation and increasing impact. For example, recognizing a critical gap in federal coronavirus relief, the State of Illinois initiated a cash assistance program for undocumented immigrants and other individuals who were ineligible for unemployment. The program was funded through both private philanthropy and general revenue funding and has resulted in the deployment of over \$20 million across the state. As we continue this work, we will embrace new technologies, innovative approaches, and funding solutions that are made possible through partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Workgroup Members

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Illinois State Board of Education – State Superintendent Carmen Ayala

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