

The Blueprint for Prosperity for Louisiana Women

In 2017, Louisiana continues to struggle with a fiscal crisis, the reduction of state services in education, health care, the environment, and services for children and families. Without stable funding for essential state services, Louisiana continues to try to cut our way to prosperity.

Even with the efforts of state and local elected officials and local leaders in nonprofits, the faith community and business, the State continues to rank near the bottom in many indicators of quality of life and economic prosperity.

Challenges Facing Louisiana Women

Louisiana's challenges are well documented by governmental sources, national media and advocacy organizations.

- ❑ U.S. News and World Report labeled Louisiana the worst state in the country in March 2017.ⁱ
- ❑ Wallet Hub, a financial advising website identified Louisiana as the 2nd worst state for women in the nation based on 19 indicators of key living standards.ⁱⁱ
- ❑ Over the last thirty years, the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data has ranked Louisiana 50th, 49th or 48th.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ❑ Louisiana has an F for being 49th for the overall health and well-being of women and girls.^{iv}
- ❑ Louisiana is ranked 2nd highest in overall poverty with more than 21.8 % of women and 28.4 % of children in poverty.^v

Louisiana must focus on solutions so that the state will not continue the race to the bottom. This *Blueprint for Prosperity for Louisiana Women* is the compilation of work from the committees of the Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission. This summary is intended to identify key areas where state government can focus to improve the economic security and well-being of women and families in Louisiana. Louisiana has many women living financially secure and prosperous lives, but Louisiana must face the reality of systemic poverty and the challenges facing many women and their families who work hard every day to make a better life. Women, regardless of economic status, suffer from the inequality of wage disparity, domestic violence, lack of access to health care and lack of high paying jobs.

THE LOUISIANA WOMEN'S POLICY AND RESEARCH COMMISSION

Members appointed by the Governor are selected from state agencies, the Legislative Women's Caucus, academic and professional areas including law, education, health and the social sciences to represent the racial, ethnic, regional, religious, socio-economic and political diversity of Louisiana.

Duties:

- To monitor the status of Louisiana women for the purpose of evaluating their economic, educational, and health concerns, needs and/or hardships;
- To identify and analyze trends that impact the health and prosperity of Louisiana women;
- To advise the Governor on particular hardships, concerns, and needs that challenge Louisiana women and their possible solutions.

**Louisiana Women's Policy and
Research Commission**
Charmaine Caccioppi, Chair

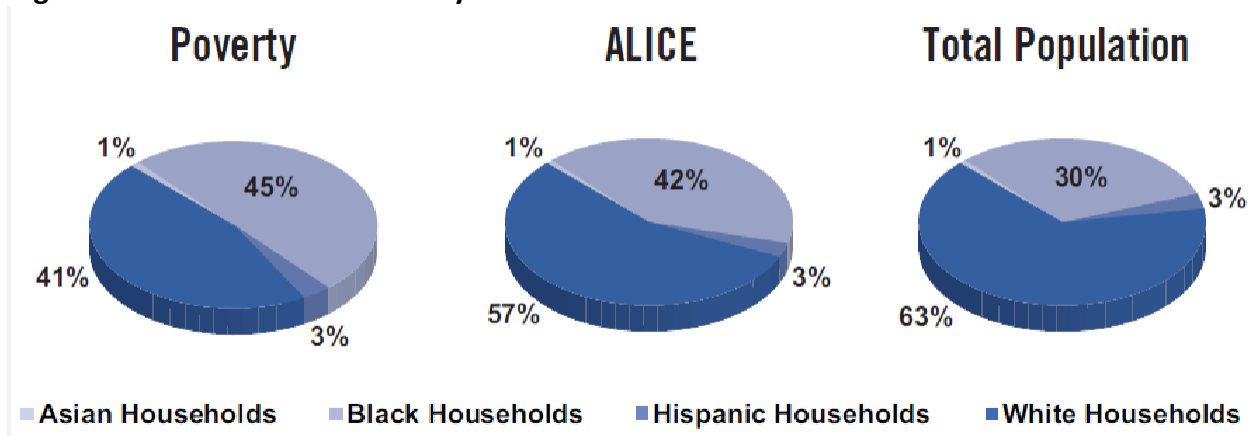
Governor's Office on Women's Policy
Shanta Proctor, Ph.D., Director



Economic Security

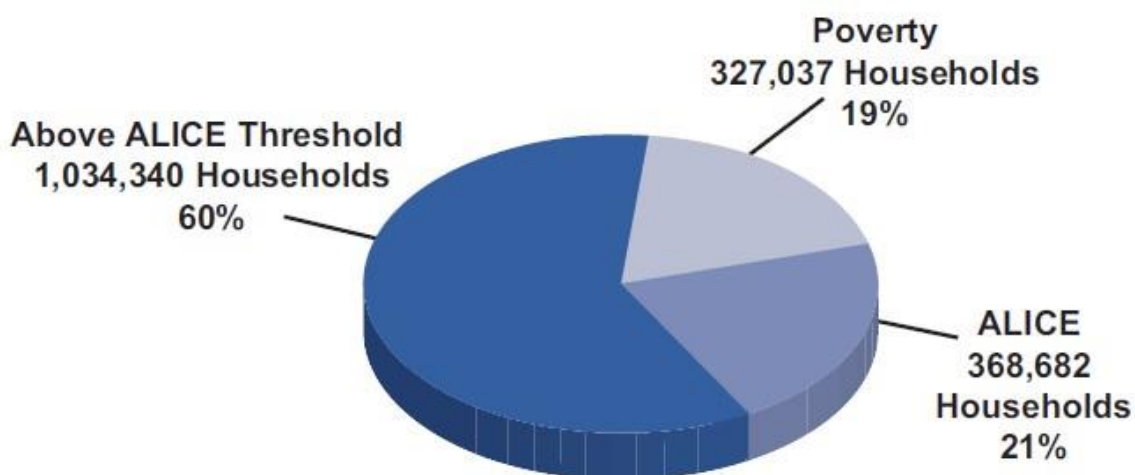
The earnings of women are critical to their chance of success at achieving economic security for themselves and their families. To make ends meet, get healthcare, send children to school and college, and put away enough for retirement – women breadwinners need equal pay for equal work, a living wage and a work environment that supports families. Unfortunately, too many families live in poverty or on the verge of financial crisis. The United Way Worldwide created a new standard to help communicate this fragile financial position – ALICE- Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

Figure 1: Louisiana Households by Income and Race



- ② 40% of Louisiana families are living in financially fragile conditions without access to financial stability, savings for emergencies and basically living paycheck to paycheck.
- ② According to the Louisiana Budget Project, TANF at 20 Report, nearly 1 in 5 Louisianans lived below the poverty line in 2014 -- the third-highest rate of any state. More than 400,000 Louisianans live in what is called “deep poverty,” meaning they have annual incomes below half of the federal poverty line. And more than 300,000 Louisiana kids lived in poverty in 2014^{vi}

Figure 2: Louisiana Households by Income Level



Household Survival Budgets Are More than Most Women Are Paid

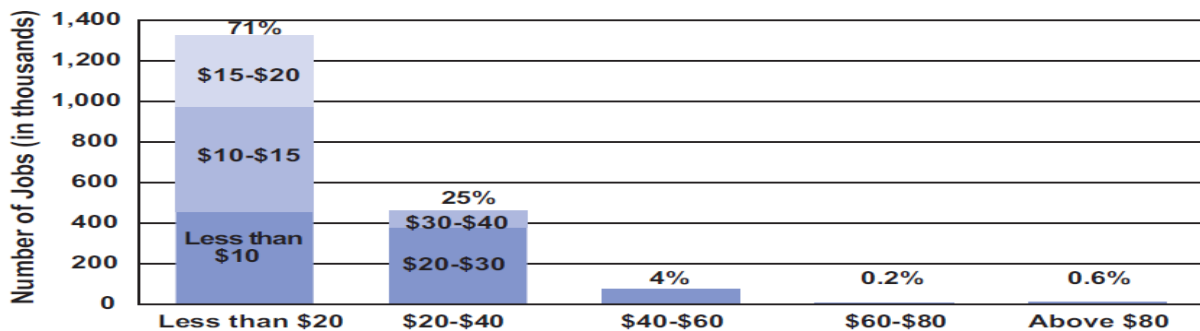
Figure 3: Monthly Costs for Households

Monthly Costs — Louisiana Average — 2013			
	SINGLE ADULT	2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER	2007 — 2013 PERCENT CHANGE
Housing	\$517	\$713	20%
Child Care	\$—	\$791	16%
Food	\$177	\$535	17%
Transportation	\$347	\$694	8%
Health Care	\$109	\$435	17%
Taxes	\$161	\$47	-39%
Miscellaneous	\$131	\$322	11%
Monthly Total	\$1,442	\$3,537	11%
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$17,304	\$42,444	11%
Hourly Wage	\$8.65	\$21.22	11%

The most recent data indicate that 19% of Louisiana’s population live in poverty. The federal poverty line varies between \$11,490 for single people and \$23,550 for a family of four. Another 21% of families are living at the ALICE level- one emergency away from poverty. In a 2014 study, the Jesuit Social Research Institute at Loyola University determined that 33 percent of married parent families and 83 percent of single mother families in Louisiana don’t have enough income to be financially secure. The numbers are based on the premise that a “modest and dignified” economically secure living should cover essentials.^{vii}

Unfortunately, most of the jobs in Louisiana do not pay a living wage to sustain a family with one wage earner. The primary concerns of the Women’s commission are equal pay for women and raising the minimum wage. In Louisiana, women make up 51 percent of the population and almost half the workforce.^{viii}

Figure 4: Most Louisiana Jobs Do Not Pay a Sustainable Living Wage



Economic Security and Self-Sufficiency for Working Women

Too many women are working full-time or working more than one job to try and support their families. Unfortunately, many women are limited by access to child care, transportation, education, paid, sick, and family leave, and employment skills. In 2014, 56.3% of women in Louisiana participated in the civilian labor market and the workforce was 48% women.^{ix}

Raising Minimum Wage

- ❓ In Louisiana, 70% of minimum wage workers are women who make the federal rate of \$7.25 an hour.^x
- Over half the women earning minimum wage are 25 years or older and most do not have a spouse’s income to supplement their own.^{xi}
- ❓ A full-time minimum wage salary pays \$15,080 based on working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. This is over \$5000 less than the 2016 poverty rate for a mother with two children, and condemns even a household of only one parent and child to poverty.^{xii}

Louisiana families are poor because they are working in minimum wage jobs and have to be subsidized by the state. According to a 2013 report from the National Employment Law Project, the following data were available on Louisiana employees working in the “Fast Food” industry.^{xiii}

Figure 5: # of Employees working in the Fast Food Industry as an example of Public Sector Subsidies

	EITC	Medicaid and CHIP	Food Stamps SNAP	TANF
Louisiana people	539,300	375,700	508,000	17,900
Cost to LA (in millions)	\$1,374.5	\$4,365.4	\$1,222.9	47.5

Maintaining the minimum wage at \$7.25 an hour forces the state to subsidize private business owners who fail to pay their employees living wages. Since these employed people are working, but still eligible for public sector benefits, the burden shifts to the state and federal government to subsidize working families. If Louisiana businesses paid a living wage, then the state could save significant money subsidizing working families.

According to the Louisiana Budget Project report- TANF At 20, From 1996 to 2016, Louisiana’s high poverty rate has barely budged. And the amount of state and federal dollars invested in helping the poorest families afford necessities and become self-sufficient has fallen dramatically. A monthly average of fewer than 7,000 Louisiana families received cash welfare benefits in 2015 – compared to more than 70,000 in 1996, the year the federal government replaced the guarantee of cash assistance with an annual block grant to states that they could spend flexibly. Today 4 of every 100 Louisiana families living in poverty get cash assistance -- far below the national average of 23 per 100.^{xiv}

Obstacles to raising the minimum wage in Local Municipalities

Since 1997, Louisiana law has prohibited local jurisdictions from raising the minimum wage or requiring a number of vacation or sick leave days. New Orleans has raised the wages of its own city employees and requires city contractors to pay a higher wage of over \$10 per hour, but was unable to set the higher minimum.

Wage Disparity and Gender Wage Gap in Louisiana

According to the U.S. News and World Report, Louisiana is the worst state for pay inequality. The gender wage gap is more prominent in Louisiana, Utah and Wyoming than in any other part of the country, according to a new report, by Andrew Soergel, Economy Reporter on April 12, 2016:

Working women in Louisiana earn only 65.3 percent of what their male counterparts bring home each year, making the Pelican State the worst place in the country for wage equality . . . That study estimates that the average full-time working woman in the U.S. earns nearly \$11,000 less per year than the average man – a 21 percent difference that varies widely across the country . . . In Louisiana, however, it's 34.7 percent.

"There appears to be a correlation between strong equal pay laws and smaller gender pay gaps," the study said.^{xv}

Despite the passage of the Equal Pay Act, the wage gap persists, hurting Louisiana families.

Wage disparity for women means that in Louisiana, the average woman loses about \$17,000 a year adding up to a lifetime earnings loss of over \$670,000 in 40 years.^{xvi} Families, businesses and the economy suffer as a result. These lost wages mean families have less money to spend on goods and services that help drive economic growth. For example, if the wage gap were eliminated, on average, a working woman in Louisiana would have enough money for approximately:

- 132 more weeks of food for her family (2.5 years' worth);
- ☐ Nearly 14 more months of mortgage and utilities payments;
- ☐ Nearly 21 more months of rent;
- ☐ 4,822 additional gallons of gas.^{xvii}

Figure 6: Median Earnings for Louisiana Men and Women

Median Earnings in the past 12 months (based on 2014 data)	LA Women	LA Men	US Women	LA Women's earnings as % of White Men's	Pay Gap
Earnings Full time Year Round	\$32,478	\$48,742	\$39,087		
White	\$36,428	\$53,683	\$40,368	67.9%	32.1%
African-American	\$26,400	\$35,178	\$34,727	49.2%	50.8%
Asian	\$35,297	\$42,918	\$46,900	65.8%	34.2%
Hispanic	\$27,694	\$32,933	\$29,173	51.6%	48.4%
Earning Less than \$15,000	10.16%	5.59%	6.45%		
Earning over \$50,000	26.01%	50.44%	36.57%		

Data provided courtesy of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (2017).

In spring 2017, Governor John Bel Edwards hosted the 2017 Equal Pay Summit, through his Office of Programs and Planning. This event, the first of its kind in Louisiana attracted business leaders, legislators and equal pay supporters from around the state to Baton Rouge. The Summit was designed to provide information and create an opportunity to equip, educate and arm equal pay advocates with the skills to become legislatively engaged. The summit was one of several pushes to rally support for pay equity ahead of the 2017 legislative session.



Governor Edwards, First Lady host equal pay summit

What Does the Wage Gap Mean for Louisiana Women?

Women Achieve Higher Education Levels than Men

Educational Attainment	US	Louisiana
High School graduate or higher	86.3%	82.8%
• Male	85.6%	81.1%
• Female	87.0%	84.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	29.3%	22.1%
• Male	29.3%	21.1%
• Female	29.2%	23.1%

On average, Louisiana women are better educated than Louisiana men. Women make less on average than men regardless of occupation and with few exceptions, women make less in the same jobs.

Barriers

If Louisiana women and families will benefit from closing the wage gap, what are the barriers to achieving Equal Pay? Employers benefit from paying the lowest wages possible and offering the fewest benefits. Driving business decisions from the bottom line instead of a goal of fairness or equity further complicate pay equity.

The wage gap persists because many employers try to pay employees the least amount possible and usually peg salary negotiations to the salary of the applicant's last job. Asking about previous salary history is a standard technique to "lowball" job applicants.

A main barrier to equal pay is pay secrecy where employees are threatened with punishment or dismissal for voluntarily sharing salary information with their coworkers. Protecting disclosure – or what some call "transparency" – the freedom to voluntarily talk about your wages with someone else in the workplace -- is a critical tool needed to stop gender discrimination in the workplace.

The difference in the wage gap between public and private employment gives statistical evidence to the need for this tool. There is less discrimination in public employment where wage transparency is more prevalent. In 2014 Louisiana census data, the pay of women in private for-profit jobs was on average 26 cents to the dollar lower than in state government jobs, and approximately 20 cents to the dollar lower than in local and federal government jobs.^{xviii}

Equal Pay legislation that includes pay transparency has passed in 15 states. Louisiana has a pay transparency statute which only

Lessons about Pay Secrecy -

the overt or implied threat of punishment or firing for talking with co-workers about wages.

Lilly Ledbetter was a supervisor for 20 years at an Alabama Goodyear plant. Because of pay secrecy, she did not know that she was getting paid less than the male supervisors.

Just before she retired, someone anonymously slipped her a note about the unequal pay she had been getting for years.

She sued and though she won at a lower court level, she never received compensation due to a technicality – a timing issue – established unexpectedly by the Supreme Court decision. The court said that she should have sued after her first discriminatory paycheck.

How could Lilly Ledbetter have known?

Ledbetter was told that if she discussed her pay, she wouldn't have a job and no one would tell her because they could have been fired. The Lilly Ledbetter Act remedied the timing issue, but not the problem of pay secrecy.

The practice of allowing women to discover and work with employers to rectify pay discrimination is commonly referred to as the trending term, "pay transparency."

applies to public state workers – not private employees.

Most new equal pay laws ensure that businesses cannot prohibit employees from voluntarily talking to one another about wages, or asserting their rights to pay equality. Some of them also make clear that no one is required to disclose wages; that those employees who have access to payroll information as a part of their job duties are not free to talk about everyone's wages; and that the usual protections for proprietary business information stay in place.

Minimum Wage and Wage Disparity Recommendations:

- Raise the minimum wage: an increase in the state minimum wage could help close the gender pay gap and reduce poverty.
- Families would be more economically secure and could rely less on government safety net programs.
- Business benefits from the flow of more money in the economy, lower employee turnover and increased productivity.
- Prohibit discrimination, retaliation or punishment against an employee for voluntarily discussing his wages or those of another employee who has voluntarily disclosed his wages in the workplace.
- Remove references to “intentional” in RS 23:332 passages related to discrimination in employment.
- Require contractors working for the state to certify compliance with all equal pay and workplace discrimination laws, including complying with the provisions of the Louisiana Equal Pay Act R.S. 23:661-669 et seq.
- Get Louisiana low income workers on a path to earning a living wage by increasing the minimum wage higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Give local jurisdictions the power to adjust working conditions with cost of living adjustments built in that will benefit their families by amending R.S. 23:642 to allow local jurisdictions to raise the minimum wage or require a number of vacation or sick leave days.
- Require employers to provide a minimum number of 7 days of paid annual sick leave for full time employees.
- Increase access to quality, affordable child care by increased funding for child care providers, which ultimately benefits working class families and minimum wage earners.

Child Care --Barrier For Employment

One of the biggest barriers for women in the work force is access to affordable, high quality childcare.

The state has reduced access to child care for low-income working families and families with special needs – The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved reducing weekly work requirements for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) from 30 hours to 20 hours per week. CCAP is the only program that assists low-income working parents to pay for child care. The work requirement was reduced to 15 hours for parents of children with disabilities and for parents attending school.

Unfortunately, the reduction in access to child care means that nearly 30,000 no longer have child care.

Commercial child care centers charge families anywhere from \$110 to \$200 a WEEK for child care. The cost of child care is greater than a 50% of the weekly earnings for a minimum wage worker.

If we want to encourage women to work, access to affordable child care should be a priority.

Barriers to Work: Access to Quality Affordable Child Care

Child care has become one of the biggest expenses in the household budgets of low-income Louisiana families, and costs continue to rise. One of the best long-term investments is providing families with access to high-quality child care and education for children under four years old. More than 40 percent 25 of Louisiana children are already behind their peers academically when they start kindergarten.^{xi}

The state used more TANF dollars to ensure that all eligible working families struggling to afford quality childcare can access childcare subsidies. The aid comes via the Child Care Assistance Program, or CCAP. Largely federally funded, it helps pay the cost of child care for children from birth to 4 years old while parents are at work, school or in job training. The number of children served by the program had shrunk by more than 70 percent since 2008 — from more than 39,000 then to about 11,000 now — due to a combination of severe state-level budget cuts and increased eligibility requirements.^{xx}

Overall funding for child-care assistance has fallen by almost 70 percent since 2009 and the state currently spends no general-fund dollars for this purpose. Any investments made in high quality child care programs for low-income children will pay dividends over time; studies have shown up to a \$13 return on every dollar invested in quality early care and education.^{xxi} Using U.S. Census data, the state recently calculated that income-based programs such as CCAP, Head Start and Early Head Start serve less than 15 percent of the children who likely could qualify. **That leaves about 145,000 children from infants to three-year-olds unserved.**^{xxii}

Not only is affordable childcare not generally available, child care at work sites is practically nonexistent. Child care for afterhours care is limited and expensive. For women in education, child care is very limited at community colleges and universities. As of 2014, there were 22 community colleges in Louisiana, and only 4 offered on campus child care. Of the 36 four year colleges, only 7 offered on-site child care.^{xxiii}

Education is a Determinant of Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency

Educational achievement prepares our women for their careers, allows women to climb the professional ladder, contribute greatly to household income, build self-confidence, and contribute in the workplace. Higher education leads to job stability and more employment opportunities. Studies have also found that a high level of educational attainment leads

to greater success, lower levels of depression, greater levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, and an overall improvement in general outlook and health.

Access to education and job training are essential to change the trajectory of women’s lives, to insure access to higher paid employment and pathways to prosperity.

Figure 8: High School Graduation is a Key Factor to Success

High School Graduation Rate	All Students	White	Hispanic	African American	Asian Pacific Islander
Louisiana	72	78	70	65	85

Louisiana has been improving the graduation rate over the last several years. According to the National Women’s Law Center Report, “When Girls Don’t Graduate We all Fail” (2007), approximately 30% of girls in Louisiana do not graduate from high school. The dropout rates are even more troubling for female students of color. The rates are even worse for girls of color: nationwide, 37% of Hispanic female students, 40% of black female students, and 50% of Native American/Alaskan Native female students failed to graduate.^{xxiv}

The economic costs are particularly steep for women, who face especially poor employment prospects, low earnings potential, poor health status, and the need to rely on public support programs. Moreover, because education is so important for girls’ economic futures, there are particular societal benefits when girls stay in school.

Status of Louisiana Women in STEM Careers (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)

Data indicates that although women comprise close to half the workforce, they only comprise 25% of the STEM-related jobs. STEM jobs also provide some of the highest wages and the gender wage gap is lower for STEM jobs. In the United States a woman in a STEM job earns 14 cents less for each dollar a man in the same job earns. Louisiana will need 69,000 workers in STEM-related jobs in 2018. Data on interests in STEM related fields by gender in Louisiana shows that for the past few years. 47 percent of males and 14 percent of females have indicated an interest in pursuing STEM related majors. As of 2015, approximately 27.7 percent of those working STEM fields in Louisiana are women, compared with 28.8 percent nationwide. In 2012 – 2014, Louisiana’s public colleges graduated 22,500 women and 15,800 men, but two-thirds of the STEM degrees were awarded to men. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, women receiving STEM degrees tend to major in physical and life sciences. Female STEM majors are about twice as likely as men STEM majors to choose education and health related jobs.

Amongst women leaders, there exists a general consensus of support for career exposure and technical education to STEM fields for female students. Legislative support for STEM programs and collaborations amongst multi-disciplinary facets of the educational system is likely a productive approach. The support and implementation of educational programs that support girls is key to the future success of leveling the acquisition of STEM related professions and other non-traditional roles for women in the workplace. For example, Louisiana’s Jump Start training program is one example of specialized skilled worker opportunity programs.

The Jump Start Graduation Pathways provide career and technical training and credentials for students to enter high wage, high needs jobs. Girls are encouraged to train for non-traditional jobs that will pay

Educational Attainment Affects Health Risks of Dropping Out of High School

Future Economic Security and Well-Being of Girls and Their Families

1. One in Two Female High School Dropouts Aged 25-64 Is Unemployed.
2. Have Higher Health Risks And Less Access To Health Coverage.
3. Have Higher unemployment and lowered earnings.
4. Less likely than adults with more education to have health insurance undergo preventative health screenings, or exercise regularly.

Implications of Dropping out on Teen Pregnancy

Some Female Dropouts Are More Likely to Become Pregnant as Teenagers than Females Who Stay in School.

40% of the female dropouts surveyed—about 48% of the Hispanic female dropouts, 34% of the White female dropouts, and 33% of the Black female dropouts—gave birth before age 20.

Graduating from High School and delaying the birth of the first child leads to better outcomes.

The single greatest determinant of poverty is the age of the mother at the birth of the first child. Younger mothers have the greatest likelihood of low educational and employment outcomes.

them a high wage. There are also k-12 schools with an emphasis on STEM courses and training. Many schools also have robotics clubs that include participate in competitions. Additionally, the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is working to provide programming for exposure and training in STEM.

Challenges facing Young Women and Girls

Lack of Health Information and Access to Health Care

Louisiana does not have comprehensive health education curriculum to address issues around hormonal development, puberty, personal care and hygiene and making responsible decisions concerning healthy eating, sexual activities or abstinence, and exercising.

Even though the teen pregnancy rate in Louisiana is decreasing, the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases is affecting younger people.

Health Care Advocates have been pursuing age appropriate health education and access to health care. Over the last twenty years, more schools have health clinics and health professionals on staff, but these facilities cannot address topics about sexual behavior or contraception.

Even though Louisiana does not participate in the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, according to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, when teens are dating they are more likely to have sex. Adolescents who have sex early are less likely to use contraception, putting them at greater risk of pregnancy and STDs.

Louisiana currently does not mandate that sexual health education be taught in schools. State law requires that, if sexual health education is taught, that abstinence must be emphasized and that parents may opt their children out of instruction. All educational materials must be submitted to the local or parish school board and reviewed by a parental review committee.

While teen birth rates are decreasing, they remain higher than the national average. Nearly one in five births to a teen mother in Louisiana is a repeat birth. Black teens are twice as likely to become teen parents as their White counterparts. 2014 CDC data indicated that in Louisiana, about 30 out of every 1,000 white teenage girls give birth, compared to 47.5 among black teens and 48 among Hispanic teens.^{xxv}

Health Policy and Funding Recommendations

Louisiana should ensure that LDH enforces the MCO network adequacy requirements for primary care and gynecological services for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Louisiana should support the recommendations of the ACOG well-woman standards and provide access to preventive care outside of the ACOG recommendations, which largely focus on reproductive screening, particularly chronic conditions.

Louisiana should continue to support Medicaid reimbursement for a full range of contraceptive services, including long-term acting contraception (LARC).

Louisiana should support a Medicaid quality measure to determine the percentage of reproductive aged women at risk of unintended pregnancy who were provided a most or moderately effective method of contraception.

Louisiana should invest in the Louisiana Breast and Cervical Health Program (LBCHP) for no-cost breast and cervical cancer screenings for uninsured and underinsured women.

Coverage should be maintained at state level for both commercial and public insurance. Support the state's Medicaid quality metric for adolescent well child visits which incentivize the MCOs to focus on obtaining state determined benchmarks and supports prioritization of services for Medicaid providers.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends pediatricians develop a working knowledge of contraception to help adolescents reduce risks of negative health consequences related to unintended pregnancy. Pediatricians' long-term relationships with adolescents and families allow them to ask about sensitive topics, such as sexuality and relationships and to promote healthy sexual decision-making, including abstinence and contraceptive use in teenagers who are sexually active (the Institute of Medicine has recommended contraception as an essential component of adolescent preventative health care) State law prohibits school based health centers from providing information on birth control.^{xxvi}

Sexual Violence and Campus Safety

Sexual violence on college campuses is a pressing national concern. One in five women are sexually assaulted while in college and over 90% of those who are assaulted on campus do not report their assaults.^{xxvii}

Responding to the urgency of this crisis, the LA Board of Regents adopted an amended Uniform Policy on Sexual Misconduct (Feb 23, 2015), created and administered a campus climate survey, and created the webpage LA SAFE - Louisiana Sexual Assault Free Environment. While these were important preliminary measures, much work remains. The 2015 campus climate survey revealed that the majority of students did not know where to get help in the event of a sexual assault on campus and even fewer knew where to report an assault.^{xxviii} Sexual assault prevention and education efforts must be a top priority at Louisiana campuses. Ensuring the safety of all women students is critical for their long term success.

Women's Health

In July 2016, Louisiana expanded eligibility for the state Medicaid program, increasing the number of female beneficiaries to 542,300 in January of 2017. Even though people are on Medicaid, access to essential health services remains a challenge. The US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as of June 2015, recognizes 238 primary care shortage areas within 62 of 64 parishes. Similarly, HRSA recognizes 171 mental health shortage areas within all 64 parishes.^{xxix}

Primary Care, Contraception, Pregnancy Care and Health Screenings

According to America's Health Rankings 2015, Louisiana ranked 50th in the nation in overall health.^{xxx} Women in some regions described a lack of access to gynecological care – there is one OB/GYN for every 13,000 patients.^{xxxi}

According to the 2015 State Health Profile-CDC National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI, Louisiana now ranks 3rd in rates of primary and secondary syphilis among 50 states. In 2013, Louisiana ranked 2nd among 50 states in chlamydial infections (624.5 per 100,000 persons) and ranked 1st in gonorrheal infections (188.4 per 100,000 persons). Of the 21,376 persons currently living with HIV/AIDS in Louisiana, 26% of the cases involve women.^{xxxii}

Access to care, contraception, family planning, pre-natal and pregnancy care is difficult. Among the measures with the greatest impact on the state's overall ranking are Low Birth Weight (LBW) and infant mortality with key drivers being poor preconception health, inadequate birth spacing, and lack of inter-conception care. The most recent available PRAMS data from 2013 show that the percent of unintended pregnancies amongst women who had a live birth was 56.9% and the percent of women delivering a live birth in less than 24 months of delivering a previous live birth remained roughly at 26% from 2011 to 2015.^{xxxiii}

The 2017 Needs Assessment indicated that many women do not regularly access preventive healthcare issues: obesity, Hypertension, Diabetes, Smoking status. Under the Affordable Care Act, women's preventive health care – such as mammograms, screenings for cervical cancer, prenatal care, and other services – generally must be covered with no cost sharing. Louisiana has a high cancer incidence particularly in Breast and Cervical Cancer Rates. More low-income women do not have access to cancer screenings and generally diagnosed with later stage cancers with higher rates of morbidity.^{xxxiv}

Mental Health and Addiction Services

Majority of adults and children in inpatient psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment settings have trauma histories. 43% to 80% of individuals in psychiatric hospitals have experienced physical or sexual abuse: 51% to 90% public mental health clients are exposed to trauma: 2/3 adults in substance use disorder treatment report childhood abuse and neglect; and among adolescents in SUD programs, 70% had a history of trauma exposure.^{xxxv}

Public and private providers and clinics that participate in the care of women of reproductive age who may be prescribed opioids, using opioids illicitly, or are in treatment/on MAT for addiction should encourage and offer pregnancy testing and contraceptive counseling during all visits.^{xxxvi}

Violence Against Women

According to the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Louisiana ranks 2nd in the nation for the number of women murdered by men. In 2016, there were 46 incidents resulting in 51 domestic homicides in Louisiana. Reducing domestic homicide requires a sustained commitment to victim safety and offender accountability. Domestic violence offenders pose great danger to their victims, whether the couple is married, share children, live together or are simply dating. Victims who suffer abuse at the hands of a dating partner or a cohabiting partner of the same sex do not have adequate protections under Louisiana law. A victim's access to safety and an offender's accountability should be based on the offender's behavior, not marital status.

The goals for addressing domestic violence are safety for all victims and accountability for all offenders. Domestic abusers should be held accountable for their actions, whether they are married to their victim or not. In 2016, 60% of Louisiana's intimate partner homicide victims were not married to their abuser. In order to address domestic violence, Louisiana must close dangerous loopholes regarding access to firearms since 66% of Louisiana's domestic homicides in 2016 were committed with firearms. Access to firearms increases the risk of intimate partner homicide by over 500%, compared to instances where there are no weapons. Abusers who possess guns tend to inflict the most severe abuse on their partners.

Every year in Louisiana, approximately 100 children lose a parent to domestic homicide. Preventing domestic violence homicides requires an adequate network of safety resources for victims. Louisiana's domestic violence programs are funded in part through the Department of Children and Family Services. Most of the resources supporting these services are federal, including FVPSA and TANF funds. Less than 3% are state general fund dollars. Sexual Assault treatment and education is offered through a number of key partners, and additional funding is imperative to enforce and implement progress made to adequately serve survivors of Sexual Assault.

According to Eden House, a New Orleans based safe home that provides services to survivors of human trafficking and houses programs targeting girls who are at risk of being commercially exploited or are survivors of exploitation. Human trafficking as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of

Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence

In 2015, LCADV member programs were unable to meet 3,748 service requests from victims due to lack of resources. This turn away number has increased 106% since 2012. 20,000 victims served 90,000 shelter nights provided 33,000 crisis calls answered Louisiana's Domestic Violence (DV) Services.

Demand for shelters and services continues to increase with 45% of Louisiana parishes have very limited access to services for victims. Only 35 parishes have permanent physical points of access to domestic violence services (either outreach offices or shelters). To meet the current need for shelter, state funding for domestic violence services would need to be increased by a minimum of \$10 million. A decrease from current funding levels would cause a reduction in safety resources that Louisiana's domestic violence victims cannot afford. An 84% increase in the number of shelter beds would be required to meet the current demand for shelter.

Louisiana's domestic violence programs work diligently and efficiently to meet an increasing need for services despite uncertainty of resources. Louisiana needs at least **700 shelter beds** to house the number of women and children seeking shelter. **We currently have 380.**

fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation." A collaborative approach is needed to work to eliminate gender-based violence, especially commercial sexual exploitation.

Sex trafficking is defined by the United States government as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtainment of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000). High-risk girls are often those who have histories of abuse or neglect, have been exposed to family violence and/or drug addiction, or those who live in areas more often targeted by pimps.

Summary for Louisiana Women's Policy & Research Commission

Key Issues and Legislative Agenda

- Economic Self-Sufficiency
 - Equal Pay
 - Raise the Minimum Wage
 - Paid Sick and Family Leave
 - Job Scheduling
 - Affordable Childcare
- Access to Education
- Workforce Training
 - Encourage STEM Training and Careers
 - Affordable Child Care
- Access to Health Care
- Reducing Violence Against Women
- Reducing women in poverty
 - Elderly women in poverty
- Supporting the safety and Health of Young Women and Girls
 - Comprehensive Health Education
 - Reducing Teen Pregnancy
 - Reducing and preventing Human Trafficking
 - Access to Health Care
 - Reducing Sexual Assault

Next Steps

- Changing the Political Culture
- Electing more women in local, state and federal offices
- Encouraging advocacy and engagement in civic discourse, policy and elections

Endnotes

-
- ⁱ US News and World Report- <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings>
- ⁱⁱ Wallethub- <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-states-for-women/10728/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data gathered for the 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book.
- ^{iv} <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2015-annual-report/measure/Overall/state/LA>
- ^v National Women’s Law Center, Poverty Rates by State, 2015 (based on 2015 ACS data)
- ^{vi} United Way ALICE Report - <http://www.unitedwaysela.org/alice>
- ^{vii} United Way ALICE Report - <http://www.unitedwaysela.org/alice>
- ^{viii} Minimum Wage Laws in the States, US Department of Labor, (January 1, 2017) accessed 2-24-17-
<https://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>
- ^{ix} Louisiana Labor Force Diversity Data- p.25- data from 2015-
http://www.laworks.net/downloads/employment/affirmativeactionpublication_2016.pdf
- ^x Minimum Wage Laws in the States, United States Department of Labor, (January 1, 2017), accessed 2-24-17
<https://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.htm>
- ^{xi} National Women’s Law Center (NWLCC), Fair Pay for Women Requires a Fair Minimum Wage, (May 2015) Julie Vogtman & Katherine Gallagher Robbins
- ^{xii} Families USA, “Federal Poverty Guidelines,” available at <http://familiesusa.org/product/federal-poverty-guidelines> ; the poverty rate for an adult & two children is \$20,160 and for an adult & one child \$16,020.
- ^{xiii} National Women’s Law Center- Women and the Minimum Wage, State by State (January 2017)
- ^{xiv} Reinke, G. (2016, August). TANF at 20: Failing Louisiana’s Poor. Retrieved <http://www.labudget.org/lbp/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/TANF-Report.pdf>
- ^{xv} US News and World Report - <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings> - accessed 2-28-17
- ^{xvi} Multiply \$17,000 times 999,990 women in workforce in 2015=\$17 million per year loss
- ^{xvii} 18. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents. Cora C. Breuner, Gerri Mattson, COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH. Pediatrics Aug 2016, 138 (2)
- ^{xviii} <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/22>
- ^{xix} <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/child-care-assistance-program>
- ^{xx} <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/2017-child-care-program-statistics.xlsx?sfvrsn=2>
- ^{xxi} <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/child-care-assistance-program>
- ^{xxii} <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/22>
- ^{xxiii} Women in Community Colleges: Access to Success- <http://www.aauw.org/research/women-in-community-colleges/>
- ^{xxiv} When Girls Don't Graduate We All Fail: A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rates for Girls-
<https://nwlc.org/resources/when-girls-dont-graduate-we-all-fail-call-improve-high-school-graduation-rates-girls/>
- ^{xxv} 2014 Teen Births, RH BWT, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf
- ^{xxvi} 18. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents. Cora C. Breuner, Gerri Mattson, COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH. Pediatrics Aug 2016, 138 (2)
- ^{xxvii} : http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf
- ^{xxviii} 18. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents. Cora C. Breuner, Gerri Mattson, COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH. Pediatrics Aug 2016, 138 (2)
- ^{xxix} <https://bphc.hrsa.gov/uds/datacenter.aspx?year=2015&state=LA>
- ^{xxx} America’s health rankings 2016

-
- xxx*i* <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2015-annual-report/measure/Overall/state/LA>
- xxx*ii* https://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/stateprofiles/pdf/louisiana_profile.pdf
- xxx*iii* http://dhh.louisiana.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/maternal/IndicatorProfiles/Louisiana_14.pdf
- xxx*iv* http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/CenterPHCH/CenterPH/familyplanning/ReproductiveHealthNeedsAssessment_2017.pdf
- xxx*v* SAMHSA Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach (July 2014)
- xxx*vi* <https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>