

THE VERMONT POVERTY LAW FELLOWSHIP AND LOW-INCOME EDUCATION

Vermont Poverty Law Fellowship 2012-2014

Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.

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WHY ARE VERMONT'S CHILDREN IN POVERTY?

- Parents are Low-income
 - Low Educational Level of Parents
 - In US, 82% of children with parents who have less than HS diploma live in poverty*
- Families in Poverty Face:
 - Housing Insecurity/Homelessness
 - Lack of access to benefits/services
 - High Food Prices/Lack of Quality Food
 - Unemployment and Underemployment
 - Transportation Costs/Availability
 - Access to Quality Healthcare and Dental Care
 - Physical and Mental Disabilities

*Data from National Center for Children in Poverty (2007)

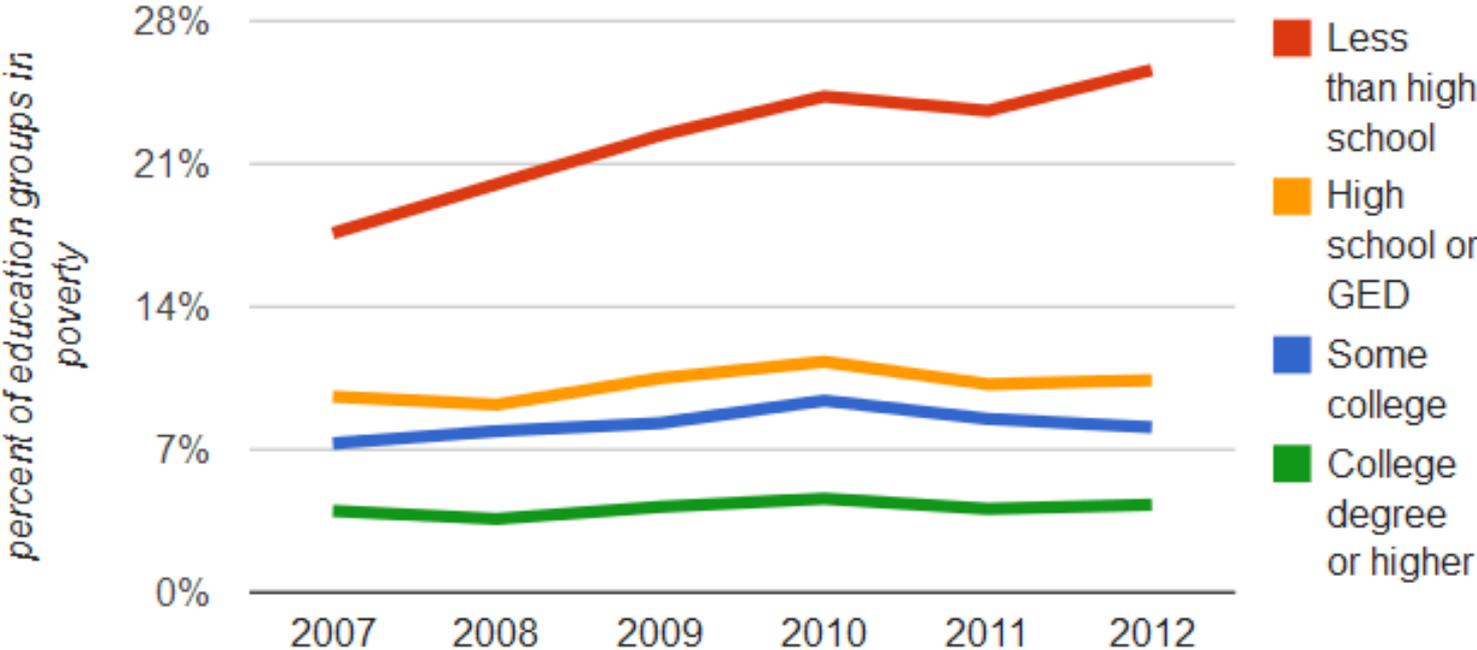


WHAT MORE CAN WE DO
TO ERADICATE CHILD
POVERTY IN VERMONT?



POVERTY AND EDUCATION LEVEL IN VT

Poverty Rate in Vermont by Education Level, 2007-2012



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA FROM U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. PRESENTATION BY HILARY NILES/VTDIGGER.



VERMONT EXAMPLE GRADUATION RATES (2010-2011)

School	Non-FRL Grad Rate	FRL Grad Rate
Burlington	92%	75%
Montpelier	97%	70%
Rutland	95%	65%
Springfield	87%	58%
North Country HS	90%	83%



VERMONT EXAMPLE GRADUATION RATES (2010-2011)

School	Non-IEP Grad Rate	IEP Grad Rate
Burlington	86%	63%
Montpelier	94%	63%
Rutland	88%	42%
Springfield	76%	55%
North Country HS	88%	72%



WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?



WHY ARE LOW-INCOME AND DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE NOT ACHIEVING?

- Trauma
- Cognitive, Behavioral, Developmental Disabilities
- State or Kin Custody
- Homeless and/or On Their Own
- Young Parents
- Frequent School Discipline
- Poverty = Court-Involvement

These children are more likely to be out of school



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE ABOUT THIS?

- Laws designed to help students access their rights and prevent school exclusion
 - McKinney-Vento
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - Fostering Connections Act
 - Right to Equal Education
 - Title IX
 - Act 264
 - JJDPA
 - VT Titles 16 and 33



CASE EXAMPLES

- **McKinney-Vento**
 - Homeless student removed from school or not enrolled
 - Homeless students not provided transportation
- **Due Process and Section 504**
 - Suspension and disability-related truancy
 - Suspension and long-term removal for “posturing”
- **Anti-Discrimination Law: Titles IV, VI, and IX**
 - Parenting student seeking access to public school
- **Vermont Title 16, Bullying/Harassment Policy**
 - Sexual harassment-related school refusal



**BULLYING
HARASSMENT
AND
DISCRIMINATION**



**FACING
SUSPENSION
OR
EXPULSION?**



**HOUSING
TROUBLES
CAUSING
PROBLEMS
WITH SCHOOL?**



**EDUCATION
FOR STUDENTS
WITH
DISABILITIES**



**WHAT STUDENT
AND PARENTS
CAN DO**

**A GUIDE FOR
VERMONT
STUDENTS FACING
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

**VERMONT
STUDENTS AND
FAMILIES
HAVE RIGHTS!**

**VERMONT
STUDENTS AND
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SYSTEMIC ACTION

- Petitioning Agency of Education and School Associations to reform homeless student policies and procedures
- Title IX Complaint to Federal Office for Civil Rights
- Section 504 Disability Discrimination Complaint to Federal Office for Civil Rights
- Work with Truancy Panels and Coalitions to Keep Disabled Students Out of Court
- Assisting with Woodside Monitoring to Ensure Adequate Education to Students in State Custody
- Compiling School Discipline Data



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS NOW?

EQUITY IN EDUCATION

- **Increase Support for Homeless Students**
 - Update School Residency and Enrollment Forms
 - Broaden Transportation Access
- **Reform School Discipline Laws**
 - Limit Suspension and End Expulsion
 - Require Tutoring when Students are Suspended
 - Improve Data Collection, Monitoring, and Publishing
- **Support (Don't Punish!) Chronically Absent Students with Special Needs**
 - Prevent Unnecessary Referrals to Court for Students with Special Needs
 - Provide Resources to Schools and Communities to Address Truancy
- **Ensure Equal Access to Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students**
 - Statewide Policy to be Adopted by Districts to Ensure Title IX Rights
- **Ensure Independent Schools Provide the Same Legal Protections to Publicly Tuitioned Students**



SAVING VERMONT TAX DOLLARS

- School Exclusion → School Failure → Dropout → Court Involvement = greater chance of incarceration as adult
 - Male dropout is 47 times as likely as college graduate to be in jail
 - Nationally, 54% of dropouts 16-24 were jobless vs 32% of graduates
- Estimated Cost to Society of Dropout = **\$292,000**
- VT Average Annual Cost per Student = **\$15, 925**
- Incarceration Costs
 - VT Average Annual Cost per Juvenile Detainee = **\$40,000**
 - VT Average Annual Cost per Inmate = **\$49, 502**



STORY #1

Picture an elementary school kid who sets off an explosive underneath the teacher's chair. The student also does things like making fake "bring your pet to school day" posters and convinces others to give their bike lock combinations away in order to switch all the locks.

What do you think about this kid?

What should we do with this kid?



STORY #2

Picture a teenager. Just after turning 17, gets behind the wheel of a car, speeds through a stop sign, collides with another car, and kills the car's driver – a star athlete and honor student.

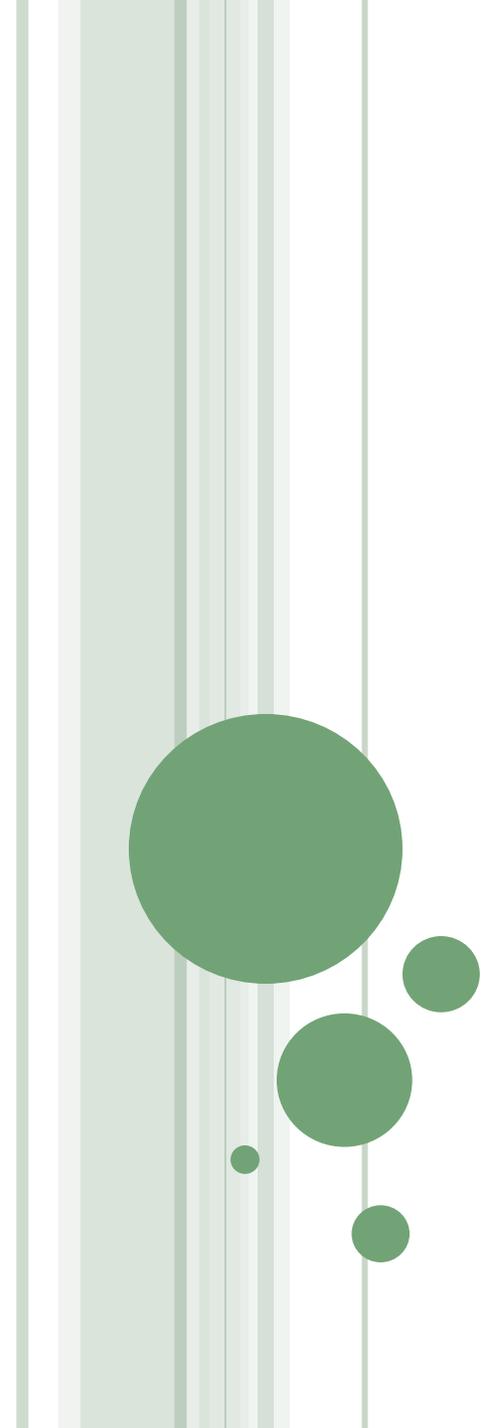
What do you think about this teenager?
What should be done?



SHORT QUIZ

- When You were a kid did you ever...
 - Shoplift?
 - Drive under the influence?
 - Forge a signature?
 - Break curfew?
 - Vandalize property?
 - Get into a fight?
 - Use illegal drugs?
 - Yell at someone in public?





THANK YOU.

Please contact me with questions or comments at jdiaz@vtlegalaid.org or (802) 383-2207.