

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2016

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Community invited to participate in Poverty Simulation workshop

(Lawrence, KS) – A handful of local agencies are hosting a unique workshop for residents to learn more about poverty in Douglas County through role playing and group discussions. Workshop participants also will explore action that can be taken to address poverty in the community.

The Poverty Simulation workshop will be from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday, June 9, at Lawrence Free Methodist Church, 3001 Lawrence Ave. During the workshop, participants will assume the roles of families and individuals facing poverty because of circumstances like job loss, divorce and disability. Participants will have to make difficult choices when adequate time and money are not available.

Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Director Dan Partridge said poverty is more prevalent in Douglas County than most people think it is. Nineteen percent of residents — nearly 1 in 5 — are living in poverty, according to the U.S Census Bureau. For an individual, that's an annual income of \$11,880 or less. For a family of three, that is \$20,160 or less. Thirty-eight percent of Douglas County schoolchildren qualify for the free- and reduced-price lunch program.

“Poverty is such a consuming condition that it rules every waking moment for people,” Partridge said. “It rules what you eat, what you do, what kind of education you get, your hope for a better future. It drives stress and stress physiologically changes you, and not for the better. You live a shorter life and have a poorer quality of life.” Poverty is one of the five priority issues outlined in the Douglas County Community Health Plan that has been adopted by the Douglas County Commission and cities of Baldwin City, Eudora, Lawrence and LeCompton.

The workshop will benefit anyone — volunteers, business leaders, philanthropists, decision-makers and those living in poverty. “Poverty is complex and it affects all of us,” said Erika Dvorkse, president and CEO of United Way of Douglas County. “It's not going to be one agency or one program that's going to fix all of these problems. We really have to work together, and if we are going to work together, we have to have some common understandings about what the problems and challenges are.”

To participate in the free workshop, visit VolunteerDouglasCounty.org and click on [Poverty Simulation](#) and select your role. Roles will be given on a first-come, first-served basis, and participants are encouraged to sign up by June 2. Youth, ages 15 and younger, should be accompanied by an adult. People are encouraged to invite family members, colleagues, club members and friends to participate as a group activity.

The following agencies are hosting the workshop:

- Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department
- United Way of Douglas County
- Communities In Schools of Mid-America
- Independence Inc.
- ECKAN