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Primary findings

- A review of research and literature finds that guaranteed income programs may improve housing stability, food security, poverty, early education, and birth outcomes.

Considerations for moving forward with a Guaranteed Income Program

- Hosting a series of data walks or focus groups with the priority population (applicant pool) might be beneficial to collect thoughts on the program.
- How will the stipends be distributed? Consider direct deposits or a debit card to track expenses.
- Evidence suggests that people start their own businesses while in the program. Consider a partnership between a local university of tech school for education.
- Who will the priority population be? Consider the zip codes and demographics of the expected participants.
- Provide resources around positive impacts (birth outcomes, food security, etc.) to maximize benefits.
- Provide additional resources to maximize impact after the program is completed.
- How will this program be evaluated? Consider hiring an external evaluator.

Introduction

During the planning of the 2024-2029 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), the Anti-Poverty

Guaranteed Income Programs provide stipends to families and individuals regularly, regardless of their income.

workgroup identified guaranteed income as a potential strategy for improving poverty among

residents in the county through a pilot program. Guaranteed income programs are programs which provide the community stipends from various entities regardless of their own individual income. The goal of the program is to improve the overall well-being of families and individuals who are living in poverty by providing them consistent and secure income. (1)

The Pilot Program

In Douglas County, this pilot program would be tailored to female-headed households who have children under the age of 18, or female-headed households expecting a child within the next year. Further, the participants would need to fall into the pre-determined ALICE threshold. Once participants are selected for the program, they will be given a \$500 monthly stipend for expenses.

The demographics of the group selected for participation in the program not only fall within the ALICE threshold but were also selected based on data collected from the 2023 Community Health Assessment, which notes that 1 in 10 children in Douglas County live in poverty, and further, many of those children come from single-headed households, which are usually female. (2) Further, the current threshold in Douglas County is 66.4%, the goal of this program will be to raise that threshold to 80% over a period of 5 years. The policy stipulates that female-headed households who qualify will need to apply for the program and will receive a monthly stipend, regardless of their current income, to use for expenses such as childcare, food, medicine, and transportation. (3)

Rationale for Guaranteed Income

Several communities in the United States have participated in pilot programs directed towards guaranteed income. The Stanford Basic Income Lab, which hosts data related to these programs,

The ALICE Threshold refers to individuals and families who are asset limited, income constrained and employed. (1)

shows that many of the pilot programs have occurred in the Midwest in similar communities to Douglas County including Des Moines, IA and Houston, TX. Further, these examples showed promise in improving historical inequities, lifted marginalized communities out of poverty, and provided better access to community resources. (4)

Within the last year, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) conducted a multi-year study on various guaranteed income programs, including the ones discussed above. The evidence suggested that these pilot programs provide additional financial support to families that lift them out of poverty and support more stable housing over time. Further, the study also concluded that participants had more flexibility with their income, suggesting that families were able to support themselves in different non-traditional ways. (5)

Impacted Population and Potential Partners

The impacted population consists mainly of the female-headed households in the program and their children; however, the program could also ripple out and impact other extended family members and the community. In late 2024 and early 2025, members of the CHIP's Anti-Poverty Working Group hosted several "data walks" where data around the impacted population was shared. These "data walks" have been impactful at understanding the impacted population.

The following potential partners have been consulted or considered:

- LiveWell Douglas County
- United Way of Kaw Valley
- Douglas County, particularly the Lived Experience Group hosted there.

Exploring the Impacts

Employment, Income, and Access to a Livable Wage

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a well-paying stable job allows workers to have access to healthier neighborhoods, access to higher quality education, childcare, insurance benefits, and can also increase one's lifespan. However, several families who experience poverty do not have high-quality jobs that provide them these benefits. Further, many of these families do not have access to a livable wage and regularly lose income earning potential due to poverty. (6) Guaranteed income programs have several impacts on employment and income. Studies suggest that there is traditionally no impact on employment, meaning that those employed stay employed. However, on average, participants of these programs saw a decrease of about \$1500 in their income monthly. This loss of income was linked to improved mental health and stability and participating more in leisure activities, which, for many, led to owning businesses. (7)

Food Insecurity, Poverty, and Housing

Lack of access to both food and housing can lead to poverty. Research suggests that a lack of stable housing can lead to evictions and environmental conditions such as lead, mold, and asbestos. (8) Moreover, these impacts can cause significant trauma, which can carry on to other parts of one's life. Food insecurity can lead to chronic illnesses including hypertension, cancer, asthma, and diabetes. All these health concerns can lead to poverty, which extends through generations. (9) Guaranteed income programs have a

TRACKING HEALTH IMPACTS

Positive Impacts Expected To:

- Housing and Homelessness
- Food Insecurity
- Poverty
- Birth Outcomes
- Early Education and Childhood Development

Mixed Impact Expected To:

- Income and Access to a Livable Wage
- Children Staying with Parents and Out of The Foster Care System.

Unclear Impacts Expected To:

- Children Experiencing Poverty
- Chronic Disease Impacting Women

No Impact Expected To:

- Employment

positive impact on all these factors, especially with the cash payments, which can pay for both housing and food, allowing for a family to lift themselves out of poverty. (10)

Expected Impacts on Children

Children are often impacted significantly by social determinants of health, especially around trauma, food security, and stability. Children who experience poverty are often at risk of developing motor delays, toxic stress, chronic illness, and nutritional deficits that lead to obesity. (11) These impacts also tend to follow children throughout their lifetime, contributing to generational trauma, and poverty. Guaranteed income programs are mixed when it comes to the impact on children. Children who are living in poverty were not studied in other pilot programs, leading to a limited amount of data on impacts. However, ample research was conducted on early education and childhood development, which showed that children performed better in school with these programs due to their parents having the opportunity to invest in their education. (12)

Birth Outcomes and Chronic Disease

Chronic disease and birth outcomes are two social determinants of health that primarily impact women, especially women who live in poverty. Women are at a higher risk of several chronic conditions including Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disease, including an increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, and depression. (13) Further, health inequities related to birth outcomes disproportionately impact women, particularly Native American, Black, and Hispanic women. Rates of preterm births and low birthweight are recorded in higher numbers for women in poverty and women of color. While the impact of guaranteed income for chronic disease is limited, there are extensive positive impacts to birth outcomes that have been recorded. (14) These programs show promises in improving mental and physical health for mothers, which in turn, improve pregnancy outcomes.

Consider Using Pilot Program to Study Chronic Conditions and Poverty Impacts on Children

Based on the findings above, more research needs to be conducted on chronic diseases and children living in poverty, as there were little to no impacts indicated in research. While we know that poverty significantly impacts children, we can deduce that guaranteed income pilot programs may not have been studying the impact of the programs on children of participants. Further, the impact of chronic diseases, especially those impacting women, were unclear. While research suggests that there is a positive impact on chronic disease reduction, it does not delineate between men and women, suggesting that pilot programs may not have been targeted to a specific gender. We suggest finding opportunities in this pilot program to study these impacts.

Conclusion

This pilot program should be evaluated on how well it lifts female headed households in Douglas County who fall within the ALICE threshold. This evaluation will need to occur throughout the pilot program, and after the program to determine, what impacts have continued to improve due to the program. Further, Douglas County might consider hiring an external evaluator to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and monitor additional, new, results after the program has been completed. Both an after-action report and evaluation should be provided to the public and other stakeholders as part of the yearly reporting of CHIP objectives and outcomes.

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