

FAMILIES OF THE RECESSION: UNEMPLOYED PARENTS & THEIR CHILDREN

More than one in ten American children has an unemployed parent as a result of the Great Recession. These children are more likely to experience homelessness, suffer from child abuse, fail to complete high school or college, and live in poverty as adults than are other children.

THE NUMBERS: CHILDREN & YOUTH IMPACTED BY UNEMPLOYMENT

The Great Recession has dramatically increased the number of children with an unemployed parent, as well as the number of youth themselves who are unemployed.

GREATLY INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH AN UNEMPLOYED PARENT

In December 2007, the month in which the nation technically entered into recession, the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent and an estimated 3.8 million children had an unemployed parent. As of October 2010, the unemployment rate is 9.6 percent, leaving 7.9 million children under the age of 18 with a parent looking for work¹. About three in ten (29 percent) of unemployed individuals are parents.

RISING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

In December 2007, 2.6 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 were unemployed (that is, they were actively looking for a job and could not find one). The latest figures from 2010 show that 3.9 million youth are unemployed² – an increase of 1.3 million youth, or about 50 percent.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Congress should extend the federal unemployment insurance program that expires November 30, 2010.

Unemployment benefits have kept 3.3 million families (1 million children) from falling into poverty in 2009 alone.³ If Congress does not take action to continue this program, over 1 million workers per month will be cut off from federal unemployment benefits⁴ – with potentially severe consequences for their children and families.

While addressing the economic causes and consequences of the downturn, we must recognize the impact the economy is having on our young people. America's children are the only future we have.

Together, we can provide them with the opportunity to prosper.

NOTES:

1 These figures are based on monthly unemployment statistics and annual data on family status of unemployed men and women (see the June 2010 First Focus Campaign for Children "Families of the Recession" report for a complete methodological explanation).

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of November 9, 2010.

3 National Employment Law Project "3.3 Million People Kept Out of Poverty with Unemployment Benefits in 2009" September 2010; http://nelp.3cdn.net/0e404890d4fcffaec3_ycm6bnaye.pdf

4 Figures obtained from the National Employment Law Project.

- More than 1 out of 10 American children (10.6 percent) has an unemployed parent.
- This translates into 7.9 million children under age 18 directly affected by unemployment.
- The Great Recession has doubled the number of children with an unemployed parent.
- Nearly one third (29 percent) of America's unemployed workers are parents.
- Unemployment benefits kept 1 million children out of poverty in 2009, but action is required to continue this program.

For more information

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