

Who is Poor? Defining Poverty By Erin Kelley

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There are two main measures of income in the United States: the median family income for a certain area, which is determined by various governmental surveys. This is the measure that REACH uses to determine eligibility for our housing.

Another measure that is often used in the media is the "Poverty Threshold" or poverty line, which is the smallest amount of income needed to have an adequate quality of life. When writing or presenting about poverty, many journalists and scholars talk about changes in how many people are below the poverty line. The 2006 poverty threshold for a family of four is \$18,810.

Who determines the poverty line, and how do they do that? This number is decided by the federal government according to a formula unchanged from the 1950s. Molly Orshansky, a researcher for the Social Security Administration, was assigned to determine the number of poor Americans.

The approach she took was to base it around data that was easily accessible to her: data on food consumption. First Orshansky looked at surveys of families' spending habits and discovered that one third of their budget went to food. Then she looked at the US Department of Agriculture's "Economy Food Plan" and multiplied the cost of that plan by three. In 1964, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$3,128.

As time went on and prices rose, the government decided an easy way to adjust the poverty line would be to link it to the Consumer Price Index, which measures changes in the prices of basic household goods—in other words, it tells us how much the cost of living changes every year. Despite the way that families and their expenses have changed over the past forty years, the way the poverty line is calculated is the same as it was in the 1960s, when it was invented.

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Contributors

	Household Size	2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines	30% of Median Family Income Portland 2006	60% of Median Family Income Portland 2006
Julia Edge				
Erin Kelley				
Debbie Lowder	1	\$9,800	\$14,250	\$28,500
Rosanne Marmor	2	\$13,200	\$16,300	\$32,600
Erin Singer	3	\$16,600	\$18,350	\$36,650
Hazel Schnider	4	\$20,000	\$20,350	\$40,750
	5	\$23,400	\$22,000	\$44,000
	6	\$26,800	\$23,650	\$47,250
	7	\$30,200	\$25,250	\$50,500
	8	\$33,600	\$26,900	\$53,800

Help With Hunger

The Food Stamp Program in Oregon

The Food Stamp Program has made severe hunger rare in America. In the late 1960s, medical research found that American children suffered and died from diseases related to severe malnutrition. In 1979, after the Food Stamp Program became available nationwide, physicians discovered that severe malnutrition had become rare, a result they attributed to the Food Stamp Program.

Today, the Food Stamp Program is the largest anti-hunger program in Oregon. Food stamps help vulnerable Oregon residents and the economy

- Approximately 434,000 Oregonians – 11.7 percent of the people in Oregon – use food stamps to meet their nutritional needs every month.
- About 82% of Oregon food stamp benefits go to households with children, many in working families. Most of the rest go to households with seniors or people with disabilities.
- Nationally, only 60% of those eligible for food stamps receive them. In Oregon, the participation rate is about 83%, one of the highest in the country. Despite Oregon's efforts, about 76,000 eligible Oregonians miss out on food stamps.



OCPP OREGON CENTER
for PUBLIC POLICY

Who Can Get Food Stamps?

To get food stamps, you and the other people in your household must meet certain conditions. Everyone who is applying in your household must have or apply for a Social Security number and be either a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or have status as a qualified alien.

If you have alien status, go to **www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov** to find out if you qualify for food stamps without a waiting period. You can also call SafeNet **(800) 723-3638**.

Food stamp applications are available at any Social Security office. If you and everyone in your household are applying for or are already getting SSI payments, any Social Security office will help you fill out the food stamp application and send it to the food stamp office for you.

All others, including those applying for or getting only Social Security, must take or send their food stamp applications to the local food stamp office or to any Social Security office where a food stamp representative works.

When you are interviewed, bring along:

- ID (driver's license, state ID, birth certificate or alien card);
- Proof of income (pay stubs, Social Security, SSI, or pension) for each member of your household;
- Proof of how much you spend for child care;
- Proof of Rent
- Records of your utility costs; and
- Medical bills for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who receive government payments such as Social Security or SSI because they are disabled.

For info on how/where to apply for food stamps, call Oregon SafeNet, **(800) 723-3638** or at **www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov**

Defining Poverty

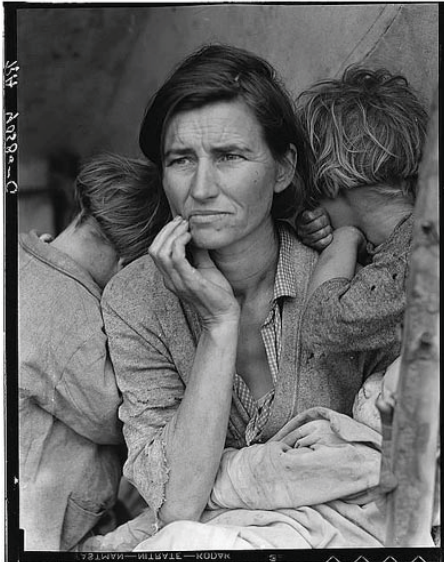
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There were many critics of the poverty line calculation, even when it was first created, and that criticism has increased over the years. First, families currently spend far less money on food than they did in the 1960s: about 14.6% percent now instead of 33%.

Second, the Economy Food Plan that Orshansky used in her formula assumes that families never eat outside the home, which is unlikely for today's time-crunched families. This food calculation was probably appropriate when more women stayed home and took care of their children. Now that most women work, they have less time for cooking at home.

Thirdly, the formula does not take into account the changing array of expenses that people must think about. More people now pay - and pay more - for their health care costs. Fewer women in the 1960s worked and so didn't have the added expense of childcare.

Childcare expenses are not a part of this calculation. Families also tend to spend a much higher amount on transportation and housing now than they did in the 1960s.



Finally, public benefits like food stamps and SSDI, which should be counted as income, are not included. This would change the picture quite a bit.

What is wrong with this picture? The most important implication of this faulty formula is that many more people are poor and struggling than the federal government's numbers would suggest. Other measures of poverty suggest that if you take into account the different kinds of expenses that the current poverty

line formula doesn't include, many more people are poor but don't qualify for the programs that use this measurement to determine eligibility. Under the official poverty measure, only 12.5 % of Americans are considered poor.

Flexcar Adding Vehicles, Reducing Join Fees

Becoming a Flexcar member is a great way to avoid paying for the high fixed costs of insurance and the hassles of maintenance while still enjoying occasional access to a car for hauling, errands, appointments, or fun.

Flexcar has over 150 vehicles placed in Portland. These low-emission and fuel-efficient hybrids, sedans, trucks, vans, wagons, and SUVs are available to Flexcar members by the hour or day. Hourly rates are as low as \$5/hour, but typically range from \$9-\$11. Day rates are as low as \$50, but typically range from \$65-\$95.

Flexcar rates include gas, insurance, maintenance, 150 free miles, and roadside assistance.

Flexcar just reduced the cost of joining from \$75 to \$35. Enter the promo code "v25pdxapt" at **Flexcar.com** to receive \$25 of initial driving credit. Transit pass holders can receive an additional \$35 in driving credit.

Visit **Flexcar.com** or call the Portland office at **(503) 238-3539** for more information.

To Your Health

Oregon Prescription Drug Program

Late last year a program opened to assist Oregonians with no prescription drug coverage to obtain prescription drugs at a reduced price.

You are eligible if you are an Oregon Resident and have NO prescription Drug coverage.

There are no income requirements. It is **free** to apply for the program. Once you apply, you are issued an OPDP card, which is good at many pharmacies throughout Oregon. The cost of the prescriptions will vary, with generic drugs being as much as **60% less** than usual cost. All drugs are at a reduced price for anyone on the program.

You can obtain medications for conditions such as Diabetes, High Blood pressure, Chronic Pain, Migraines, Depression and Arthritis, as well as many others. Each family member has to have their own card, so a separate application is required for all members.

To apply, call **(800) 913-4146** or go online to download an application at **www.opdp.org**. Spanish and Russian applications are available, as well as one in Braille.

Health Insurance Assistance Program

Federal Health Insurance Assistance Program (FHIAP) is a state program that helps uninsured Oregonians buy health insurance. FHIAP is not an insurance company. Instead, the agency gives subsidies (grants of money) to help pay the monthly cost of your health insurance premium.

This helps individuals and families pay for insurance at work or buy individual health plans if insurance is not available through an employer.

FHIAP members pay part of the premium. They also pay other costs of private health insurance such as co-payments and deductibles.

Once approved for FHIAP, members are eligible to remain in the program for 12 months. Three to four months before the member's eligibility ends, FHIAP sends a new application and members may re-apply.

<http://egov.oregon.gov/OPHP/FHIAP/member.shtml>



Correction to the After Hours Answering Service Article, January - February

In the January - February HomeFront we published an article stating that “the after-hours number can be used for flooding, leaking or any **non-emergency**. Emergencies involving fire, medical or police should be handled by calling 911”. This information was incorrect, any **non-emergency should be reported to your building manager or their voice mail if it is after-hours**. The issue will be addressed on the next business day.

Family Connections

Erin Singer Says Goodbye

I have recently accepted a new job opportunity, and will be moving on from REACH as the Resident Services Coordinator, Youth Development. I am filled with both sadness and excitement as I continue on to this new adventure. I am grateful for everything I have learned and experienced through working with the REACH community. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with everyone who is part of REACH, and will definitely miss the many conversations, challenges, and laughs we have had together. I wish everyone good luck with your future adventures.

If you have questions regarding youth or family services, please contact Rosanne Marmor at **(503) 231-0682** or rmarmor@reachcdc.org.

Tom McCall Waterfront Park

Tom McCall Waterfront Park is a must visit during the summer. Take stroll along the Willamette River and enjoy some of Portland's best sights and sounds. The Salmon Street Springs Fountain, Japanese American Historical Plaza, and seasonal concerts and festivals including the annual Rose Festival in June are all highlights. Waterfront Park **(503) 823-7529**

Cultural Pass*

Your FREE admission to lots of places!

Check out your local library's Cultural Pass and gain free admission for at least 2 adults and 2 children at places such as the Chinese Garden, Portland Art Museum, Children's Museum 2nd Generation and more!

For details call **(503) 988-5234**.

These passes are extremely popular, so reserve them well in advance.

Project Youth Doc

Project Youth Doc (PYD) is a summer video documentary program for youth ages 13-15 years old at the Hollywood Theater in Portland.

Students accepted into the program complete an intense course in documentary video and are involved in a public screening of their work. Each student must provide at least one recommendation as part of their application. Recommendations must be written by people other than parents or guardian. Call Julia at **(503) 231-0682** for an application.



Have your kids take the pledge

Even little people can make a big difference! Green living becomes second nature if you start your children making the right choices when they are young.

Start by having them learn – and live by – the Sierra Club Pledge for Kids:

- I will color both sides of the paper .
- I will recycle bottles, cans & paper.
- I will turn off the lights when I leave the room.
- I will walk or ride my bike whenever possible.
- I will only get toys that I will play with.
- I will donate my old toys.
- I will plant a tree.
- I will treat all nature with respect.
- I will not litter.

<http://www.metroparent.com/articles/features/april2007-green.html>

REACH Classifieds

Needlecraft Group

A group of residents, volunteers and friends get together and work on their various craft projects. Knitting, needlepoint, crocheting, whatever you fancy. Wonderful volunteers bring in patterns and supplies and teach those who are new. Even if you don't know how to crochet but always wanted to learn you should come. Join in the fun and wonderful conversation.

Monday, 3:30-5pm, at the Ritzdorf Court Community Room, 1225 SE Belmont.

Contact Debbie for more info **(503) 231-0585**.

Problem-solving Resource Numbers

911 Emergency

823-3333 Non-emergency police

823-2143 SE Precinct Front Desk.

232-0010 SE Uplift Neighborhood Program

988-3646 Report Senior Helpline-Elder Abuse

823-DRUG Drugs & Vice Division 24hr

823-SAFE For neighborhood traffic concerns

731-3100 Child Abuse Hotline

823-4TAG Report graffiti

823-5459 Parks & Rec security issues

988-3066 Animal Control

823-7350 Noise Control

595-4890 NW Resolutions, mediation

797-1835 METRO – Report illegal dumping

823-7309 Abandoned Vehicle Hotline

823-6814 Unmoved cars with for sale signs

823-5195 Report illegally parked vehicles

823-2867 Pot-hole Hotline

823-5216 Street Light Hotline

“I can still have something I want because I budget better.”

REACH is offering Budget, Buy & Save this summer. With the tools you will learn in this class, you will be able to have an easier time getting to the end of the month and be able to reach your financial goals.

Once you complete the five classes, you will receive a computer or another incentive, such as a class, art supplies, computer accessories, or other options.

Please contact Erin K at (503) 231-0682 x136 to sign up or for more information. Classes begin in June and will be held every other Tuesday from 5:30 – 7pm, location to be announced.

We Have a TV up for Grabs

Although we don't keep a waiting list anymore for household items that residents need, we recently received a medium-sized TV as a donation and are looking for someone to give it to... If you are interested, please call Julia at **(503) 231-0682**. You will have to pick the TV up from the main office.

Eat Well on a Budget

Cooking Class

Eat Well on a Budget

Wednesday, May 30th & Wednesday, June 27th from 6pm to 8pm at the Ritzdorf Court Apartments Community Room, 1225 SE Belmont.

Learn how to prepare a delicious meal with things right from your pantry; then eat! Just bring your appetite. Please arrive promptly as to not miss anything. Please sign up by the Monday prior to the class as space is limited.

Contact Debbie at **(503) 231-0585**.

Our Community

Oregon Food Bank Cooking Classes for Seniors

Residents at Station Place Tower (SPT) have been having a great time preparing and eating nutritious and inexpensive dinners every Wednesday evening for the past six weeks thanks to The Oregon Food Bank.

The Oregon Food Bank has a team of four volunteers who do a great job of purchasing ingredients to prepare a dinner for the class from setting up the classroom; teaching safe, efficient and creative techniques for cutting ingredients; how to substitute and stretch ingredients through making sure the kitchen is cleaned up. They even send each participant home with a bag of ingredients to make the meal at home.

The Oregon Food Bank Nutrition Education Program offers a six-week series of hands-on cooking and nutrition education classes using Share Our Strength's (www.strength.org) Operation Frontline program materials. Share Our Strength is a national hunger-relief organization.

You can attend a cooking series or volunteer as a classroom assistant or chef-instructor: Call Julie Webber, the nutrition education program coordinator, at **(503) 419-4183** or email her at jwebber@oregonfoodbank.org.

Oregon Food Bank Learning Gardens

Two Learning Gardens in Portland and Hillsboro offer cooking demonstrations using freshly harvested produce. The schedule varies based on produce ready for harvest. Contact Starr Farris at sfarris@oregonfoodbank.org

MetroFi Free Wireless Internet

No fees, no contracts, no strings!

Did you know that the Kerns and Buckman neighborhoods now have FREE wireless internet access? If you live in, or even around this neighborhood, enjoy free high speed internet service. Surf the net, shop, and send email without having to download software or pay for it. To see if you're in the current coverage area: go to www.metrofiportland.com, look for the "MetroFi-Free" network connection option on your wireless-enabled computer, and register. Internet speeds and connectivity may vary.

In order to access this 'wifi cloud', you will need a wireless internet adapter. You'll probably want one that connects with a USB cable. To find out whether your computer has a USB port, look on your computer for this symbol; it may be on the back of the tower. Local stores such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fred Meyer have wireless internet adapters. It may be cheaper to order them online if you can. Once you have the adapter, follow the installation instructions and you'll be on the web in no time.





Building A Better Community
1135 SE Salmon Portland, OR 97214

Food Closet & Computer Lab

The Food Closet and Computer Lab are open **Tuesdays from 2-4pm**. If you find that you are in need of food and can't wait until Tuesday, call Rosanne **(503) 231-0682**.

Some additional resources are:

Downtown chapel

M-Th 1-2:30pm **(503) 228-0746**

FISH Emergency Services

M-F 10:30-2:30pm **(503) 233-5533**

The Francis Center

M-TH 10-2pm **(503) 775-6784**

St. Vincent De Paul

M-F 10-12pm, 1-4pm **(503) 235-8431**

The Salvation Army

M-F 9:30-11:30am, 1-3pm **(503) 234-0825**

Mary Lucero New Scattered Sites Manager

Please join us in welcoming **Mary Lucero** as the new Scattered Site Building Manager. Mary comes to REACH with several years of property management experience with such companies such as PCRI.

She works at the main office and her hours are Monday through Thursday 8:30am until 5pm. Mary has several interests including collecting antiques and traveling. She also speaks fluent Spanish.