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OACAA releases State of Poverty Report

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies released *The State of Poverty in Ohio* in a special event today in Columbus.

The report, commissioned by OACAA and prepared by Community Research Partners, includes the latest available official measures of poverty in the state. Some regional and county break downs are available. The report also includes insights into the State of Poverty based on the continuing recession, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and the work to date by the Governor's Anti-Poverty Task Force.

Since the Task Force was created, 21 Regional Conversations on Reducing Poverty have been held. These conversations, hosted by Community Action Agencies, identified four key areas which need to be addressed to move people out of poverty, toward self-sufficiency and on to prosperity.

"OACAA believes that it is critical to continue to prioritize fundamental steps that can address poverty on a large scale," said Executive Director Phil Cole. "The Anti-Poverty Task Force Report began this by outlining various measures for reducing poverty. OACAA believes the points in the Conversations on Reducing Poverty should also be emphasized for action."

First, the Conversations identified a need for jobs that pay well and provide benefits. OACAA believes job creation must continue to be a priority for Ohio. As the state continues to transition from a manufacturing economy, the growth of higher paying jobs is essential. No cure for poverty is more effective or conclusive than a good job with benefits.

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The Conversations also identified a need for lifelong learning opportunities. OACAA believes education – from preschool to adult education, from job retraining to computer classes for seniors – contributes to individual and community self-sufficiency and prosperity.

A need for affordable housing was also identified. OACAA believes steps to address the foreclosure crisis, stabilize subsidized housing and provide energy assistance will help families maintain their homes and prevent more people from slipping into poverty.

Reliable transportation is another need which has been difficult to meet as public transportation options have dwindled. OACAA believes Ohio can take steps to build upon successful public transit systems, strengthen and maintain grant-funded transportation programs and continue to seek innovative solutions to this problem.

“These are longer-term needs that must be met for people to climb out of poverty,” Cole said. “Meanwhile, however, we found that everyone assumed that short term help would be available in the form of a safety net.”

Immediate needs of food and shelter must be provided for with stable social and household safety nets. OACAA believes coverage gaps and eligibility gaps as well as the barrier of the benefits cliff must be addressed.

The State of Poverty Report is available in both hard copy and on CD and will be posted on www.oacaa.org Monday, January 25. To receive a copy of the report by mail, contact Sharon Naragon at sharon@oacaa.org or 614-224-8500

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