



## THE POVERTY SIMULATION

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### Why a Simulation?

Poverty is a reality for many individuals and families. But unless you've experienced poverty, it's difficult to truly understand. The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) bridges that gap from misconception to understanding. CAPS is an interactive immersion experience. It sensitizes community participants to the realities of poverty.

*CAPS is not a game. It is based on real Community Action clients and their lives. CAPS exists to:*

### Promote Poverty Awareness

During the simulation, role-play a month in poverty and experience low-income families' lives.

### Increase Understanding

After the simulation, you will unpack your learning and brainstorm community change.

### Inspire Local Change

Together, you can be a voice to end poverty in your family, friends and community.

### Transform Perspectives

The goal of CAPS is to shift the paradigm about poverty away from being seen as a personal failure and toward the understanding of poverty as structural, a failure of society.

The Community Action Poverty Simulation breaks down stereotypes by allowing participants to step into the real life situations of others. Poverty is often portrayed as a stand alone issue - but this simulation allows individuals to walk a month in the shoes of someone who is facing poverty and realize how complex and interconnected issues of poverty really are.

- A single parent with limited resources and no transportation must find a way to get to work and get their child to daycare.
- An elderly person must find a way to pay for both utilities and medication.

- A young adult must care for siblings while their parent is incarcerated.
- An elderly couple must raise their grandchildren and deal with their own health and employment issues.
- After the experience, individuals then have the opportunity to discuss what they've learned with their peers.

The Community Action Poverty Simulation is a tool that helps participants rethink the challenges that millions of low income individuals must face each and every day. More importantly, this tool helps people identify areas of change that can directly impact the effects of poverty on individuals, families and communities.

### **Living a Month in Poverty**

The simulation involves participants who take on the roles of members of up to 26 families, all facing a variety of challenging, but typical, circumstances. To start the simulation exercise, each family is given a card explaining its unique circumstances.

It is then the families' task to provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities by accessing various community resources during the course of four 15-minute "weeks."

In addition, about 20 volunteers - preferably people who have experienced poverty - play the roles of resource providers in the community. This allows individuals who have first hand knowledge of poverty bring their perceptions to the exercise.

The Community Action Poverty Simulation is conducted in a large room. Participants are seated in family groups and community resources are located at tables around the perimeter of the room. The facilitator opens the simulation with an orientation to the activity, goes over ground rules, and answers participant questions during the exercise.

The activity lasts about three hours. This time frame includes an introduction and briefing by the facilitator, the simulation exercise, and a guided debriefing in which participants and volunteers share their observations and insights from the activity.

*Purchased and licensed use through the Missouri Community Action Network*

**RAPPAHANNOCK AREA OFFICE ON YOUTH**  
12000 KENNEDY LANE, SUITE 100  
FREDERICKSBURG, VA 22407  
(540)755-2636