



# **Poverty Simulation**

**A Tool to Build Awareness  
For  
Advocacy and Change**



**Catholic Charities  
of Santa Clara County**

Elizabeth Lilly  
Director, Community and Parish Partnerships  
[elilly@ccsj.org](mailto:elilly@ccsj.org)

## Step Up Silicon Valley: Campaign to Cut Poverty

A network of community based organizations, government, business, and faith based organizations

Vision: Cut the poverty rate in Santa Clara County in half by the year 2020.

Mission: Create the will in the community to cut poverty by...

Increasing awareness

Building partnerships

Shaping public policy

Increasing private and public funding

Integrating services to better meet needs of poor.

Focus on five issues...

Food

Housing

Healthcare

Education

Resources and income to be self-sufficient and to thrive.

Poverty Simulation is a key tool for awareness and advocacy.

### The Experience of the Poverty Simulation

Welcome and Orientation

- Family role
- Instructions



Experience of one month in the “State of Poverty”

- Pay bills and transportation
- Buy food, medicine, child care
- Go to work or school
- Long lines
- Limited resources



## The Experience of the Poverty Simulation (continued)

### Transformation Reflection

- What... Debrief



“It brings to light the reality of poverty.”  
– Pedro Ybarra, Society of St. Vincent  
DePaul parish conference president

- Feelings
- Insights
- Learnings

...from the experience to the reality

...from the specific to the general

### Transformation Reflection

- So what...

#### Catholic Social Teaching

- Option for Poor
- Solidarity
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Human Dignity
- Family and Community
- Common Good

“This experience really helped me to understand the sheer day-to-day frustration of being poor. The struggle never let up.”  
- Jane Hills, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County Educational Services



### Transformation Reflection

- Now what? Next Steps
  - Actions
    - Volunteer
    - Invest
    - Partner
  - Advocacy

“Empathy goes a long way toward building a community of anti-poverty activists. The Poverty Simulation teaches empathy.” – Diane Fisher, Director, Jewish Community Relations Council/Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley

## Nuts and Bolts of Facilitating a Poverty Simulation

### Collaborative teamwork

- Familiarity with the kit
- Recruitment of 40-80 participants
- Facilitator captain
- Resource recruitment and orientation
- Welcome and Family assignments
- Debrief Facilitation and Next Steps
- Kit rebuild



Elizabeth Lilly, Catholic Charities

Rebecca Cole, Community Service

Pat Plant, San Jose Presbytery

## Next Step: Host a Poverty Simulation

Contact an agency near you that owns the Community Action Poverty Simulation.

### Purchase Your Own Poverty Simulation Kit

- Directors manual
- Family packets
- Resource packets
- Compact Disc with PDF files for all materials to reprint lost items

### **Missouri Association for Community Action**

Community Action Poverty Simulation copyright holder

[www.communityaction.org](http://www.communityaction.org) or 573-634-2969

“The Poverty Immersion is an activity everyone in this county and country should experience. Putting oneself in the shoes of others fosters empathy and compassion, which is what we need to begin to find humane and dignified solutions to poverty.”

- Laura Diaz, Family Support Program Manager, Sacred Heart Community Service,

“This exercise makes it painfully clear that our current social service infrastructure is inadequate.”

– Winston Lefton, Stanford Students Taking on Poverty (STOP), Stanford University

“This is a must event for every policy maker, business leader, and non-profit to experience and better understand the reality of poverty in our community.”

- Greg Kepferle, CEO,  
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County



**Catholic Charities  
of Santa Clara County**