

## HOW TO USE THE CALIFORNIA SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD

***The California Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (Self-Sufficiency Standard), released by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development (formerly, NEDLC), quantifies the costs of basic needs for California's working families. Many policymakers, advocates, services providers, foundations, and families use the Self-Sufficiency Standard to make informed decisions on working family issues. The following is a list of those who are using the Self-Sufficiency Standard and how they are using it.***

### ***Policymakers*** are using the ***Self-Sufficiency Standard***

The *Self-Sufficiency Standard* has been used by policymakers, at all levels of government, in creating responsible and effective public policy.

- In 2009-2010, Senator Carol Liu authored SB 1084, which would have created a bipartisan multi-sector California Economic Security Task Force to analyze and inventory the state's poverty reduction programs, cited to the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* as evidence to support its creation. The bill was held in Assembly Appropriations.
- In 2007, the Los Angeles City Council also passed a resolution in support of replacing the Federal Poverty Level with the more accurate and realistic *Self-Sufficiency Standard*.
- The coalition behind the *Self-Sufficiency Standard – Californians for Economic Security (CFES)* – was actively involved in drafting Senate Bill 1639, a bill that increased access to quality, language-specific education and training programs for low-income parents and foster youth in California. The *Self-Sufficiency Standard* bolstered the case that low-income parents need greater support if they are to attain self-sufficiency level wages. This bill was passed into law in 2004.
- In 2003, former State Senator Richard Alarcón introduced Senate Joint Resolution 15, which challenged the State of California to develop a poverty index that corresponds with the *Self-Sufficiency Standard*.

Locally, the Workforce Investment Boards of Sacramento, Long Beach, Pasadena, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Contra Costa, Mendocino, San Bernardino, and Oakland have raised the eligibility criteria for intensive case management and training services based on the *Self-Sufficiency Standard*. As a result, their employment and training programs are available to more people in their communities.

### ***Direct Service Providers*** are using the ***Self-Sufficiency Standard***

The *Self-Sufficiency Standard* has provided a much-needed tool for direct service providers to accurately evaluate the needs of their clients as well as providing a basis for leveraging additional funding to increase their service capacity. Direct service providers also use the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* in education and job counseling by identifying jobs that lead to self-sufficiency wages, and as a tool in financial education.

“The Self Sufficiency Standard highlights the need for work supports in California and has served as a catalyst for developing EITC and Food Stamp Outreach projects in our state's Food Banks.” – **Jessica Bartholow, former Statewide Program Manager, California Association of Food Banks**

### ***Advocates*** are using the ***Self-Sufficiency Standard***

By using the *Self-Sufficiency Standard*, advocates can illustrate the impact of certain policies and convey community needs to decision makers, which includes showing where policies fall short. For example, the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* can highlight how using the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPL) to determine eligibility for

public programs leaves many families in a “policy gap”: they earn too much to qualify for public programs, but not enough to pay for their basic needs.

“We use the Self-Sufficiency Standard to educate policymakers and the public about the needs of low-income households. It is a very useful and credible tool for examining and contrasting the impacts of budget and policy proposals.” – **Michael Herald, Legislative Advocate, Western Center on Law and Poverty**

### ***Labor Unions* are using the *Self-Sufficiency Standard***

The *Self-Sufficiency Standard* has helped change the frame of the debate from negotiating “what the employer can pay” to “what workers need to survive.”

“In 2005, the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* showed that 93% of service workers at the University of California did not earn a wage high enough to sustain a family of one adult and one child without public assistance. In 2008, we were appalled to find that UC workers had lost ground, with 96% falling below the *Self-Sufficiency Standard*. This information helped us convince UC in 2009 that we needed a statewide minimum wage that is now lifting our families out of poverty.” – **Lakesha Harrison, President, AFSCME Local 3299**

### ***Philanthropic Foundations* are using the *Self-Sufficiency Standard***

Foundations use the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* to assess the impact of their grant-making; which programs and services most effectively enable families to reach economic security.

For example, the United Way of the Bay Area commissioned a study to track 100 families receiving different supports and evaluated which investments had the greatest impact. Orange County United Way worked with 13 grantees to evaluate how effectively their programs move families toward self-sufficiency wages. These foundations recognize that the most effective way to invest in job training and direct service programs is to know the actual costs faced by clients.

### ***Public Agencies* are using the *Self-Sufficiency Standard***

Workforce Investment Boards, Community Action Agencies, CalWORKs agencies, and community colleges use the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* to: 1) guide clients to quality jobs offering self-sufficiency wages, 2) expand high-wage job training opportunities, and 3) enable people to access work supports.

"SETA uses the Self-Sufficiency Standard to define self-sufficiency wages in Sacramento County. We raised the eligibility criteria for intensive case management and training services to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, which has made our employment and training programs available to more people in our community." – **Robin Purdy, Deputy Director, Sacramento Employment & Training Agency**

### ***Working Families* are using the *Self-Sufficiency Standard***

The *Self-Sufficiency Standard* has allowed working families to plan for their economic future and understand how their financial security is affected when their life circumstances change. Equipped with data on the minimum income needed to make ends meet in their communities, families can make more informed decisions about how much income they need to live in a given community.

**For more information, please visit: <http://www.insightccd.org>.**