

# Poverty Simulation Information

United Way of  
Northwest Arkansas



United Way of Northwest Arkansas will facilitate the Community Action Poverty Simulation free of charge for organizations in Northwest Arkansas that wish to gain a better understanding of poverty.

## **Poverty Simulation Overview**

The Poverty Simulation experience is designed to help participants begin to understand what it might be like to live in a typical low-income family trying to survive from month to month. The object is to sensitize participants to the realities faced by low-income people and to motivate participants to become involved in activities which help to reduce poverty.

Participants will be living in poverty for one month—a month consisting of four 15-minute weeks. The goal of the simulation is for participants to keep their home secure, feed their family on a regular basis, keep their utilities on, make all necessary loan payments, pay for miscellaneous expenses, and deal with unexpected situations. The simulation lasts a total of three hours.

In the simulation, participants will be assigned to one of the following roles:

- **Family Member**—Individuals assigned to a family will be given a specific role, and are expected to act out that role as realistically as possible. The family will work together to survive the month by paying typical monthly expenses and meeting unexpected situations that arise.
- **Community Resource Staff**—Individuals assigned to the Community Resource Staff will be assigned to one of the following resources: bank, super center, Community Action Agency, employer, utility company, pawn broker, social service agency, faith-based agency, payday and title loan facility, mortgage company, school, community health center, and child care center. There will also be individuals assigned to portray the police and a thief. These resources are critical to the success of the simulation, as families will be greatly affected by the Community Resource Staff.

## **United Way of Northwest Arkansas' Responsibilities**

- **Pre-Event Planning**—UWNWA will work with the requesting organization to ensure all pre-event planning is complete. UWNWA will provide the requesting organization with a pre-event check-list.
- **Poverty Simulation Set-Up**—UWNWA will work with the venue and/or requesting organization dedicated staff member(s) to set-up the tables and chairs. UWNWA will complete all other Poverty Simulation set-up, including signage and material set-up.
- **Poverty Simulation**—The Poverty Simulation will include an introduction and briefing, the actual simulation exercise, and a debrief session.
- **Poverty Tear-Down**—UWNWA will complete all Poverty Simulation tear-down responsibilities, including taking down signage and material pick-up.

## **Requesting Organization's Responsibilities**

- **Venue**—The Poverty Simulation requires a space of at least 3,000 square feet, with at least 13 tables and 180 chairs, and a microphone. The organization will be responsible for securing and paying all applicable costs for the venue.
- **Food**—Since the Poverty Simulation lasts 3 hours, you can opt to provide food and drinks for participants. It is not required, but any food costs would be at the expense of the organization.
- **Recruiting**—The Poverty Simulation requires at least 100 participants, and it is suggested to register around 120 individuals. The organization will be responsible for filling all spots, and will be responsible for marketing the event and handling pre-event registration. All marketing materials must be approved by United Way of Northwest Arkansas.
- **Staff Support**—The organization will need to have a dedicated staff person that coordinates the event with United Way of Northwest Arkansas. The organization will also need to provide one to two staff members to assist with room set-up, event sign-in, food, and other tasks on the day of the poverty simulation. These staff members will still be able to participate in the simulation.

## **Simulation Set Up Details**

UWNWA will need access to the facility early to set up the simulation. UWNWA can provide the room layout for tables and chairs if the facility or requesting organization is able to set up the room prior to the UWNWA set up time. If the room layout is complete, UWNWA will need approximately two hours to set up the remaining simulation materials.

## **Scheduling a Poverty Simulation**

To schedule a poverty simulation, please contact the United Way of Northwest Arkansas Community Impact team at [impact@unitedwaynwa.org](mailto:impact@unitedwaynwa.org).