



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

POVERTY STANDARDS: HUMAN RESOURCES THAT IMPACT DISABILITY

A forum was held at the Brookings Institution on a supplemental measure of poverty. Presenters at the forum were representatives from the U.S. Census Bureau, White House, U.S. Department of Commerce, economist, and poverty experts.

Summary

The U.S. Census Bureau has developed a new supplementary poverty measure. There are arguments of the validity of the current poverty standard in that there are multiple measures of deprivation. For instance, some point out that it ignores billions of dollars in family income, including government benefits that help low income families. In addition, some believe that most poor Americans live in relative comfort and the new measure is a statistical trick to keep the poor with us and artificially increases subsistence to the poor. On the other hand, there is concern that the current standard is too low and narrow and does not reflect the increased cost of family living standards over time which includes added income needs for food security, affordable health care, standard housing, savings, and adjustment for geographic differences in living standards.

Disability Prevention

The poverty measure is used to distribute billions of dollars for human services to millions of vulnerable people in the U. S. that may prevent diminished health that can contribute to disability. There is need for a framework of multiple measures related to poverty risk that reflects what is needed to spend on life necessities, basic economic security and forms of economic hardship associated with disability prevention. The European poverty level is 60% of median income. It is 28% in the U.S.. When developed in the U.S., poverty was 44% of median income: however, by 2007 it was 28%. The current federal poverty level excludes the majority of low income Americans and there are twice as many families above the poverty line that experience food insecurity as there are in poverty.

Activity

There is ongoing study of the implications of impoverished conditions on diminished health that can lead to disability

Principle

The poverty standard in the U.S. should be adequate to meet the health needs of people in the country.