



## Interested in hosting a Poverty Simulation?

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Central Michigan University offer the Missouri Community Action Network ([www.communityaction.org](http://www.communityaction.org)) poverty simulations throughout the year to CMU and Non-CMU organizations including public schools, nonprofits, and businesses.

To find out how to schedule a simulation, as well as general information, visit:

[www.ehs.cmich.edu/povertysimulation](http://www.ehs.cmich.edu/povertysimulation).

Or contact our CMU representative:

**Dr. Katie Reck**

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*The Human Environmental Studies*

# Poverty Simulation

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The **Missouri Community Action Network Poverty Simulation** allows participants to break down stereotypes and step into the life of those living in poverty.

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## + How the Poverty Simulation Works.

Poverty is often portrayed as a standalone 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.
- A family of five must find a way to pay for both utilities and their mortgage on a limited income and resources.
- 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 simulation, individuals discuss in small and large group settings what they've learned with their peers and how this experience impacted them.

+ "I have more respect for what these families struggle with. It is very eye opening!"

**Anne C.**  
CMU Social Work Student

+ "CMU did a great job presenting the simulation to us. I thought that not only was it an eye opening opportunity and a valuable activity, but a much needed "something different."

**Vicki Foreback,**  
Teacher, East Olive Elementary

+ "I've seen the difficult situations many of our families go through, but it was different during the simulation to feel that way. After work and errands, there still wasn't enough time for the kids, and the bills still couldn't get paid. I left the simulation so grateful."

**Jennifer Newman,**  
Teacher, Gateway Elementary

## + Living a Month in Poverty.

The simulation allows participants to take on the roles of members of real-life families, all facing a variety, but typical, challenging circumstances of those who live at the poverty line.



**To start the simulation, each individual is given a unique family member identity to play.** The family is given a set amount of resources then tasked to provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities for the family for four, 15-minute "weeks". They must go to work, acquire day care, send children to school, pay bills, and deal with the unexpected circumstances of life.



**Approximately twenty people play the roles of community providers.** This allows individuals to observe and experience the stressors related to working with individuals living in poverty.



**The activity lasts 2 to 3 hours.** This time frame includes a brief training of simulation volunteers, welcome, the simulation exercise, and a guided debriefing in which participants share their observations and insights from the activity. The debriefing time can include content tailored to your organization's focus and goals for hosting the simulation.



**Simulations are conducted in a large room.** Participants are seated in family groups and community agencies are located at tables set up around the perimeter of the room. The room should be large enough so people can easily move around.



**The facilitator opens the simulation with an orientation to the activity,** goes over ground rules, and answers participant questions during the exercise.



For more on CMU's Poverty Simulation, see [ehs.cmich.edu/povertysim](https://ehs.cmich.edu/povertysim).