Delaware should be a state where every child lives in a financially secure home. To help children grow into prepared, productive adults, parents need well-paying jobs, affordable housing and the ability to invest in their children’s future. However, throughout our country’s history, policies and practices have helped move some families along the path to economic security while putting up roadblocks for others. Practices such as redlining in the housing market, employment discrimination and inequitable criminal justice policies have created circumstances in which children of color are more likely to experience poverty than their white peers.
In Delaware, 12.8 percent of children (approximately 27,000 kids) lived in poverty in 2017-2019, down from 21.2 percent in 2012-2014. This is Delaware's lowest child poverty rate since 2004-2006.

More than a decade ago, Delaware's Child Poverty Task Force set a goal to reduce child poverty by half within ten years. Recommendations were made across a wide range of areas to impact these data by strengthening economic opportunity for children and their families. However, an economic recession hit the nation shortly thereafter, negating anti-poverty efforts within the state and negatively impacting Delaware's child poverty rate.

Delaware Policy Inventory is created, detailing over 200 pieces of legislation enacted to address needs of Delaware children and families since 2009, when the child poverty task force released their recommendations.

The Supplemental Poverty Measure is created and data show that government interventions reduce economic hardship for children.

The poverty measure is established based on research indicating that families spend about one third of their income on food; this is updated for inflation annually but otherwise unchanged despite differences in the typical family's budget.
**Why Does it Matter?**

Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. It increases the likelihood that a child will be exposed to factors that can impair brain development and lead to poor academic, cognitive and health outcomes. It also can result in higher rates of risky health-related behaviors among adolescents. Extended exposure to poverty contributes to worse economic and health outcomes for adults. The risks posed by economic hardship are greatest among children who experience poverty when they are young and among those who experience persistent and deep poverty.

No community is immune to child poverty – even those that by other economic measures appear wealthy. Nevertheless, employment opportunities, wages and access to work supports such as early care and education differ across the state, leading to variation in child poverty rates among communities.

**Next Steps**

Delaware families of all backgrounds work hard to provide a better life for their children. Effective poverty reduction strategies will focus on supporting family success by building wealth and assets, encouraging entrepreneurship and educational attainment, enhancing income and earnings potentials, increasing access to needed resources through system coordination and outreach and enhancing services from prevention to early intervention, prenatal care, school readiness and early care and education. No single course of action will significantly reduce child poverty; therefore, a multi-faceted approach that includes creative partnership and services, reallocation of monies, investment of new funds and policy revision is needed to create a cumulative effect.
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The photographs in this data snapshot do not necessarily represent the situations described.

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