

Voices for Virginia's Children

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VA Child Poverty Still Rising: Almost 40,000 More Virginia Children Now Growing Up Poor

The latest U.S. Census Bureau figures published today reveal a continuing and alarming increase in child poverty in Virginia since the beginning of the recession. Virginia's child poverty rate, at 12.2% before the recession, climbed to 14.5% in 2010, its highest level in 15 years. Nearly 270,000 children are now poor, an increase of 17% since 2006, the year before the official start of the recession.

"For these thousands of children and their families, the recession is clearly not over", warns John Morgan, Executive Director at Voices for Virginia's Children. "The recession continues to exact an awful toll on far too many children, threatening their development and putting Virginia's future prosperity at risk by diminishing the potential of today's kids – tomorrow's workforce."

The weak economic recovery and persistently high unemployment are major factors in the rising child poverty rates. The child poverty rate has increased every year since 2006 – the change from 2009 to 2010 was from 14 to 14.5%.

The U.S. child poverty rate in 2010 was 22%, up from 20.5% in 2009. While child poverty in Virginia is less severe than in the nation as a whole, the state's recession-driven increase is alarming nonetheless.

Child poverty is the most worrisome of the risks threatening this generation of children. "Prolonged poverty, like that now being experienced by more Virginia children than ever before, threatens to rob them, their families and Virginia of their full potential", says Morgan. "The message to policymakers couldn't be more clear: in tough times, hang tough for kids. Refuse to cut safety-net supports that help struggling parents cope with and rise above poverty. Pulling the rug out from under families would surely deepen the harm to kids, and further delay Virginia's recovery."

The most powerful anti-poverty measures during tough times include unemployment assistance, child care assistance for low-income working parents so they can find reliable child care and stay employed, and child nutrition assistance programs like food stamps and the school lunch program.

Voices for Virginia's Children is an independent, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that champions public policies to improve the lives of Virginia's children.

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We Make Kids Count!