

SWWDC Brings Self-Sufficiency Calculator to Region

A powerful counseling tool is now available to help working adults better understand what it will take to meet their basic needs.

The Self-Sufficiency Calculator is a free, online tool that determines how much income working adults need to meet their basic needs, based on factors such as family size, county of residence, housing costs, taxes, and many other factors.

The calculator provides clients with information on wage adequacy to help them determine goals and strategies to achieve self-sufficiency. It also can be used to measure the results and impact of organizations in assisting customers and their families to become economically self-sufficient.

The SWWDC is bringing the Self-Sufficiency Calculator to SW Washington, where it will be available free to anyone who wishes to use it.

The Calculator is designed to:

- 1) Help low-income individuals and job seekers with career planning and budgeting
- 2) Help the SWWDC and other area organizations determine the true impact of its programs on customers' ability to provide for their families and be economically self-sufficient

Key Facts about the Self-Sufficiency Calculator:

- Free for anyone to use at www.swwdc.org (beginning November 2007)
- Based on the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington, a series of formulas developed by Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington School of Social Work
- Shows costs for 70 different family types, based on the number and ages of dependents
- Using 2006 information on the cost of basic needs in all Washington counties, the calculator shows the earnings required for a specific family to be self-sufficient, i.e., to meet its needs without public assistance
- Calculates expenses of the following basic needs: housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, miscellaneous and taxes
- Is customized for the family's area of residence in all counties.
- Expense amounts can be customized to reflect the family's real current costs
- Can be used to test scenarios, such as whether a career path or specific job will pay enough to cover a family's needs or how moving to another part of the county might affect a family's expenses
- Takes into consideration any public subsidies the user receives, and shows subsidies he/she might be eligible for and how to access them

- Includes a database that tracks whether customers made progress toward economic self-sufficiency during their participation

The Self-Sufficiency Calculator....

Allows Front-Line Staff To:

- Help clients set realistic career and earning goals
- Provide a foundation for basic financial literacy counseling
- Quickly assess the impact of work supports on a customer's career/training plan
- Provides Program Clients With:
 - Accurate cost-of-living and wage information specific to their community
 - A basic "reality check" about their income which is the first step towards comprehensive financial literacy
 - A tool to help build and track household budgets
 - Quick links to other resources

Allows Program Managers To:

- Document agency impact on client progress toward self-sufficiency

Provides Policymakers With:

- Data that measures state and regional progress toward closing the wage-gap for working families
- Baseline data to drive economic development strategies that generate more living-wage jobs

For more information, visit <http://www.thecalculator.org/> or contact Jordana Barclay at 360-567-1070.