

Impacting Our Youth: Bringing Stability to an Unstable World

This January, Ohio's Development Services Agency released The Ohio Poverty report, which provides detailed information about poverty across the state. The report found that while the statewide poverty rate averages 15.8%, larger cities experience a higher rate than most other areas. In Cleveland, this number is more than double the statewide average, with 35.4% of residents living in poverty.

To many, these numbers are staggering. But to OhioGuidestone, they serve as a reminder of the continued need to provide pathways for a growing population struggling with chronic poverty. Over the past 10 years, OhioGuidestone has provided pivotal programming to help these individuals with their workforce development needs. Since 2005, we have grown from programs that helped participants for four weeks at a time, to programs that help change the foundation for whole families with direct assistance and support for up to two years. Currently, 100% of the young adults who enter OhioGuidestone's Workforce 360° Program are living below the federal poverty level. This is not surprising, as The Ohio Poverty Report also found that 18-24 year olds are at the greatest risk of living in poverty, particularly if they are lacking a high school degree. Many of these

young adults come to us uncertain where to begin. It is not enough for our young people to learn how to write a resume or how to ace a job interview. They need to learn how to create stability despite their existing circumstances.

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Workforce 360° staff members work with participants to think about their lives in a whole new way. Our programs have grown to consist of integrated, comprehensive training that includes GED prep, occupational and work readiness training and continued employment services. Following concepts based on the work of Dr. Ruby K. Payne, Phil Devol and "Bridges Out of Poverty", our participants also work through a curriculum called "The R Rules: A Guide for Teens to Identify and Build Resources" by Elizabeth Souther. This curriculum encourages young adults to talk about the realities and the struggles in their lives, as well as examine the resources they have available. Resources such as health and wellbeing, relationships with role models and understanding the unspoken cues of a group, are presented as important aspects of life that youth can use to their advantage. Our staff encourages participants to be open to possibilities they had not previously considered and to realize, while they cannot change the situations they come from, they have the power to change their futures. This combination of job and resource training enables youth to design a personal plan for their lives and make real, lasting change.

Of youth that have completed our workforce programming, 80% have gained employment or gone on to higher education. Youth who started in our employment programs earning \$8 per hour saw an average increase to \$10.25 per hour upon completion of the program. A year later, these salaries continued to increase, and now this same group averages

\$13.65 per hour, more than a 50% increase over their initial earning potential. Additionally, many of our Workforce 360° graduates are also moving off of public assistance. In the State of Ohio, food and cash assistance for a family of

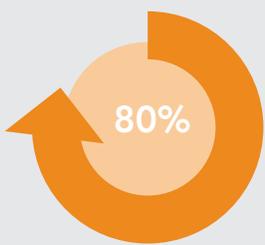
four account for \$1,231 per month. As participants of Workforce 360° maintain employment and become more self-sufficient, they no longer need this critical support, empowering their ability to provide for their families and improving the economy by lessening dependence on public assistance. These outcomes give us a concrete view of how we are directly impacting the lives of individuals and helping to bridge the gap that is created by poverty. But there are also elements that we cannot measure, such as the confidence our participants gain by taking control of their lives. They complete our program with a new sense of stability in the world and the knowledge that the support they need can always be found at OhioGuidestone.

Our Workforce 360° programs strive to provide these much needed services, but we need your support to help continue this critical programming. Your charitable gift can help keep our Workforce 360° programs operational, despite changes in federal funding. You can also help the future of our programs by advocating for continued government support. Tell your state representatives that funds need to be allocated to social service agencies to continue work with young adults in poverty and provide the long term, life changing programs. If you would like to advocate on our behalf, or receive more information about Workforce 360°, contact Kiersten Watkins, *Director of Workforce Development Programs*, at Kiersten.Watkins@ohioguidestone.org. To make a charitable gift, call 440.260.8362 or visit www.OhioGuidestone.org.

BY THE NUMBERS

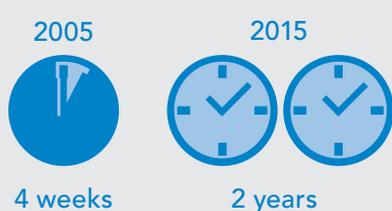
Since 2005, OhioGuidestone's Workforce 360° services have made a profound impact on those involved in its programs.

SUCCESS RATE:



Program graduates who are employed or pursuing higher education.

AVERAGE INCREASE IN LENGTH OF PROGRAMMING:



AVERAGE INCREASE IN EARNING POTENTIAL:

