

Principles and Components for Economic Self-Sufficiency in Bucks County

Preamble: Persuaded by experience that long-term system changes matter, and with a core conviction that all women and their families deserve access to services that help them achieve permanent economic self-sufficiency regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious belief, economic condition, or medical and behavioral health status, the Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition comes together to support the following key principles and related specific components and strategies to achieve those ends, through awareness, advocacy and action:

Principles Statement: (LONG RANGE)

On behalf of Bucks County women and their families, the Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition advocates for empowering women with education, training, resources and support so they may progress steadily toward achieving economic self-sufficiency and freedom from abuse. The Coalition supports a public and private economic and social system in Bucks County based on shared responsibilities and guided by the following principles:

Basic Needs:

1. Women must have safe, secure housing;
2. Women must have access to nutritious food and reliable transportation;
3. Women must have access to comprehensive integrated services;
4. When assistance is needed, it must be provided in a manner that enables women to be as independent as possible and to achieve their full capacity in the economy;

Jobs and Education:

1. Women must have educational opportunities to achieve financial literacy;
2. Women must have an adequate supply of employment opportunities which pay family-sustaining wages;
3. Women must have access to high quality, affordable childcare (including early care and education), eldercare, assistance to disabled individuals and caregiver support;
4. Women must have workplace training and development needed for ongoing marketability and advancement;

Health and Safety:

1. Women must have access to appropriate health care for all family members;
2. Women must be freed from predatory, exploitive, and abusive practices and persons.

The effort to achieve these principles will be guided by gender-specific data collection and analysis, and accountability of and support for all agencies and organizations working to implement these principles. Benchmarks will be set and reviewed periodically to reflect the inherent dynamics of the economy.

Principles and Components for Economic Self-Sufficiency in Bucks County (Continued)

	Principles	Components & Strategies
		Basic Needs
1	Women must have safe, secure housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a comprehensive housing strategy that supports the creation of affordable housing for all income levels and needs, and works with all sectors of the community • Build awareness in the entire community about the state of housing in Bucks County • Make efficient use of currently available housing assistance programs • Establish inclusionary zoning throughout the county • Promote the interests and skills of women in home construction, maintenance and repair, for self-reliance
2	Women must have access to nutritious food and reliable transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to nutritious food is basic for good health, healthy children, and clear thinking at school and work. • Have transportation for training, work, daycare, and medical appointments for women and their dependents • This must include public transportation access • Establish community partnerships (senior centers, school districts, churches, banks, car dealerships, etc) to identify resources for repair, donation, or financing of individual vehicles
3	Women must have access to comprehensive integrated services when needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and improve 2-1-1 use for one-step information and referral to services • Establish open and transparent interagency communication • Create awareness of and efficient access to all human services, to possibly include a centralized 800 number for intake
4	When assistance is needed, it will be provided in a manner that enables women to be as independent as possible and to achieve their full capacity in the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a strengthened public and private social safety net that addresses both temporary and long-term needs • Modify the existing support system so that it moves women and families from support to self-sustaining as efficiently and effectively as possible (eliminate the current “Cliff Effect”)

Principles and Components for Economic Self-Sufficiency in Bucks County (Continued)

Jobs and Education		
5	<p>Women must have educational opportunities to achieve financial literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create affordable and accessible educational opportunities to include the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A balanced household budget; ➤ Well maintained checking and savings accounts; ➤ Awareness of legal protections and support resources ➤ Acceptable credit rating or enrollment in an approved Credit Repair Plan ➤ Awareness of identity theft and dangers of internet use
6	<p>Women must have an adequate supply of employment opportunities which pay family-sustaining wages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community and economic development strategies that create jobs • Create and use appropriate and accessible training and education programs to enable women to qualify for these jobs • Make subsidies available for training and education programs for job qualification • Require equal pay for equal work • Change TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) to enable women to obtain a high school degree or post secondary education • Encourage government, schools, unions and nonprofits to provide support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women and girls to prepare for careers that lead to self-sufficiency ➤ Women and girls to pursue nontraditional occupations • Educate, encourage and support employers and unions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Actively recruit women into predominantly male jobs that pay better than traditional female jobs with similar educational and skill requirements ➤ Work to retain women in traditional and nontraditional jobs • Create laws and funding for education and training programs that address the needs of specific groups of women, e.g., displaced homemakers, women veterans, etc. • Require employers to provide paid sick leave and family leave • Revise poverty guidelines to more accurately reflect the cost of living in Bucks County than does the Federal Poverty Level • Define a family-sustaining wage for Bucks County

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7	<p>Women must have access to high quality, affordable child care (including early care and education), eldercare, assistance to disabled individuals and caregiver support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve compensation and professional development opportunities for care and education providers • Increase assistance for families who are ineligible or waiting for subsidies for care for children, elders and disabled individuals • Increase availability of services for families who are waiting for services for care for children, elders or disabled individuals • Encourage businesses and organizations to institute policies that recognize their employees' responsibility for family and help to bridge gaps in caregiving • Collaborate with other organizations that follow and advocate for these issues and have similar principles, such as the Bucks County Quality Child Care Coalition (QCCC), Public Citizens for Children & Youth (PCCY), Center for Advocacy on the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE), Pre-K for PA and others • Increase awareness of the needs (including the economic impact among others) of the caregiving system • Increase awareness among women of the caregiving resources, including support for caregivers, that are available • Increase community resources to support elders and disabled individuals to live and age in-place with the quality of life they desire
8	<p>Women must have workplace training and development needed for ongoing marketability and advancement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or ensure access to literacy programs for non-English speaking women • Provide technological resources, especially in the areas of science, math, technology and engineering to encourage girls to explore and succeed in these fields which tend to include better paying jobs • Provide education, training, internships, career development, tutoring, and mentoring programs that support women and their children throughout the educational and professional development process • Ensure fully-enforced anti-discrimination laws and policies • Encourage employers to establish family-friendly workplace policies

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Health and Safety		
9	Women must have access to appropriate health care for all family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality, affordable health insurance for all family members • Provide outreach and health education to improve the use of preventive health care services and screenings • Support solutions for related public health issues such as poverty, nutrition, addiction, and gun and sexual violence prevention. • Create system-wide support to increase access to primary care providers. • Enhance collaboration and encourage advocacy among all organizations seeking to ensure access to health care services, including comprehensive reproductive health care, prevention and treatment services for behavioral health, including substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse.
10	Women must be free from predatory, exploitive, and abusive practices and persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish non-tolerance of predatory, discriminatory practices, abuse and neglect of any consumer • Protect women from abuse of any kind • Put in place education and prevention programs targeted against domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking for the community at large • Provide education for everyone on how to identify and report suspected cases of predation, abuse or trafficking.