

ABOUT US

The Metro Center serves as the conduit between metropolitan decision-makers and the knowledge base of Washington's research land-grant university to address critical issues facing our communities.

Metro Center staff provide management support for all projects including project scoping, assembling the project team, monitoring subcontracts and deliverables, and reporting.

By utilizing short-term, project based teams, the Metro Center is able to respond quickly to requests from metropolitan elected officials, decision makers, and non-profit leaders.

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Metropolitan Center for
Applied Research & Extension

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



THE POVERTY IMMERSION

A Virtual
Experience of
Life on the
Edge

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THE POVERTY IMMERSION

A Virtual Experience of Life on the Edge

For policy, program, and professional development

WHAT IS A POVERTY IMMERSION?

The Poverty Immersion is an interactive workshop that changes attitudes and challenges stereotypes about the working poor—paving a pathway toward professional growth and organizational transformation.

Participants assume the role of a family member living on limited resources. Aiding in the workshop are volunteers playing the roles of social service workers, bankers, school teachers, grocers, law enforcement, health care etc., providing a 'community' with whom the participants interact. It sounds simple enough until attendees are faced with the impossible daily dilemmas that are common when resources are scarce and stress is high. The activity is followed by a facilitated debrief, customized for each organization.



Martha Aitken

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"It was something I thought could help raise our awareness...which it has...Whether it's affordable housing or homelessness, these are all things that cities are dealing with."

IMPACT

- **Policy Development:** Lay the groundwork for policy changes that increase organizational and program effectiveness, and truly make a difference.
- **Program Development:** Gain new insight into how poverty impacts access to programs and outreach.
- **Professional Development:** Improve decision making and communication when interacting with low-income clients.

AFTER THE POVERTY IMMERSION – FROM EMPATHY TO ACTION

The Poverty Immersion is only the first step. The Metropolitan Center helps agencies and organizations take concrete actions to assess, plan, implement and evaluate sound changes in policies and programs to better serve a diverse clientele. The Metropolitan Center takes an individualized approach, recognizing each organization's unique structure, needs and goals to craft sustainable and impactful change.



WORKSHOP REQUIREMENTS

Participants

- A minimum of 40 and a maximum of 80 participants to portray family members
- An additional 17-20 volunteers to play the roles of resource providers
- Participants are coordinated by the host organization

Time

- A Poverty Immersion lasts 3 hours, including the activity and a debrief discussion
- Resource provider volunteers arrive one hour earlier for an orientation

Facility

- A large room (approx. 3,000 sq. ft.)
- 15 tables of any size, and up to 180 chairs, set up prior to the workshop
- 1-2 wireless microphones
- The facility must be available for a total of 5 1/2 hours to accommodate set up, the workshop and clean-up

Fee

- The Poverty Immersion is a fee-based service. Contact the Metro Center for more information.