

# CLOSE the GAP:

A BUSINESS RESPONSE TO OUR REGION'S GROWING DISPARITIES

Brooklyn Park

Spring Lk. Park

Mounds View

Shoreview

North Oaks

Hugo

Fridley

White Bear Lake

Brooklyn Center

New Brighton

Arden Hills

Vadnais Heights

Crystal

Columbia Heights

Robbinsdale

St. Anthony

Roseville

Little Canada

North St. Paul

Golden Valley

Falcon Heights

Maplewood

St. Louis Park

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Edina

Richfield

MSP International Airport

Mendota Heights

West St. Paul

South St. Paul

Woodbury

Bloomington

Eagan

Inver Grove Heights

Newport

Cottage Grove

Savage

Burnsville

St. Paul Park

A JOINT PROJECT OF GREATER TWIN CITIES UNITED WAY AND THE ITASCA PROJECT

## DEAR TWIN CITIES EMPLOYER:

The Twin Cities region is a widely recognized success story. Our economic vitality and quality of life are the envy of regions around the country. Our population, jobs and income are growing and our cultural amenities are world-class.

There is another story, however, that sometimes gets lost. That is the story of individuals, families and communities that do not share in the region's success.

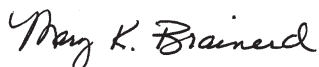
The Brookings Institution has recently issued a report, "Mind the Gap," that details the alarming facts about the socioeconomic disparities in our region. (To read the full report, go to [www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm))

We believe that acting aggressively to address these disparities is not only the right thing to do – it is also the smart thing to do.

Closing the gap will require major policy change, but it will also require smaller changes in the decision-making and acts of individuals and organizations throughout the region. Employers have a particularly important role to play.

This toolkit is intended to promote practical suggestions for employers to make a positive impact on disparities issues. These suggestions will not solve what are very complicated and often entrenched issues. They will make a difference. We hope that you will help us take the first step towards closing the gap by adopting actions outlined in this toolkit.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.



Mary Brainerd  
President and CEO, HealthPartners  
Chair, Itasca Project Socio-economic Disparities Taskforce



Lauren Segal  
President and CEO, Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Member, Itasca Project Socio-economic Disparities Taskforce

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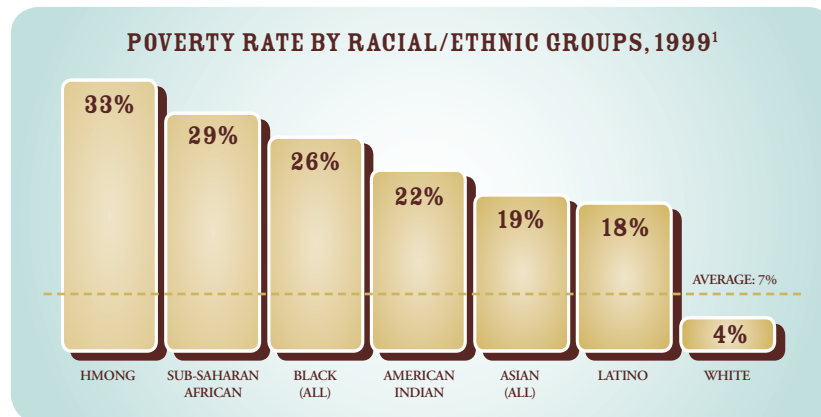


## WHAT IS *the* PROBLEM?

THE TWIN CITIES REGION FACES A GROWING DIVIDE that threatens its economy. A number of studies document profound and growing socio-economic disparities among race and ethnic groups, between low- and high-income groups, and between those living in the core cities and the suburbs.

### DISPARITIES BETWEEN RACE AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Poverty is just one of many socioeconomic indicators linked to race. Among other things, if you are nonwhite in the Twin Cities, you are more likely to be homeless, be a crime victim, be uninsured, be underemployed, and even to die early.

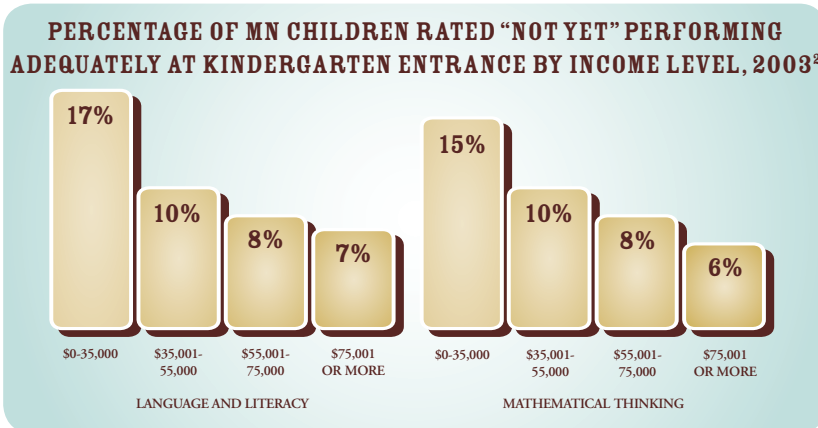


The impact of these race-based disparities on the region is growing dramatically as the population becomes increasingly diverse. From 1990 to 2000 the region's nonwhite population increased by 110 percent.

<sup>1</sup> Brookings Institution

## DISPARITIES BETWEEN LOW-INCOME AND HIGH-INCOME GROUPS

Before low-income children even start school, they are already behind their higher-income peers. Low-income children are more than twice as likely to be unprepared for kindergarten versus those in the highest income category. This disparity continues through all levels of education, regardless of race and other factors.

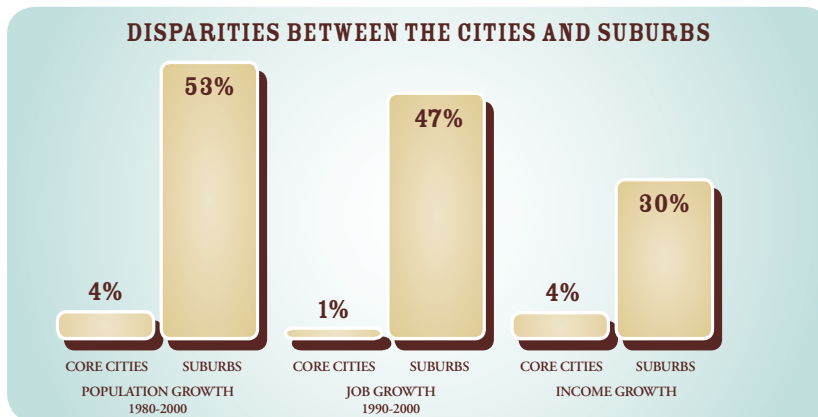


Income, like race, is tied to a multitude of socioeconomic indicators from housing to health to job security.

## DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE CITIES AND SUBURBS

The core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are losing ground to the suburbs on a number of fronts.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the core cities are dealing with greater concentrations of socio-economic problems. For example, the core cities have 22 percent of the metro’s overall population but 54 percent of the poverty population.

The region ranks second in city-suburb poverty disparity among the 40 largest metro areas – outranking Newark, Baltimore and Detroit.<sup>4</sup> The core cities also perform worse than the suburbs on indicators such as crime rates, high school dropout rates and unemployment.



<sup>2</sup> Minnesota School Readiness Year 2 Study <sup>3</sup> HUD State of the Cities Database <sup>4</sup> Brookings Institution



## WHY DOES *it* MATTER?

INDICATORS SUGGEST THAT WITHOUT INTERVENTION, DISPARITIES WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, threatening the region's economy. Metropolitan areas with high levels of income inequality tend to have lower levels of overall income growth.

Addressing disparities will fundamentally strengthen the Twin Cities economy and improve overall quality of life. From a business perspective, addressing disparities will:

- **Increase the size and quality of the workforce.** Nonwhite populations are a major source of labor growth in the Twin Cities, accounting for over 37 percent of the labor force growth between 1990 and 2000. Employers who figure out how to best tap this labor market will have a significant competitive advantage in facing forecasted labor shortages.
- **Increase the size and strength of the local market.** Low-income and minority residents represent potential customers and an untapped market (there are half as many retail employers per capita in the inner city vs. the suburbs).
- **Improve the region's fiscal situation.** Reduced disparities lead to increased tax base and decreased public expenditures on the direct and indirect costs of poverty.



## WHY DO WE HAVE *these* PROBLEMS?

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, GROWTH PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC TRENDS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO GROWTH IN DISPARITIES. These trends combine to create complicated problems such as employment spatial mismatch – when jobs are located in the suburbs and workers are inner-city residents. This is particularly true with unskilled jobs sought by lower-educated workers.

The underlying issues are complex and interrelated. For example, a homeless child is two times as likely to have learning disabilities and six times as likely to have stunted physical growth as the average child.<sup>5</sup>

For many populations the problems are persistent. The interrelatedness of these issues can lead to vicious cycles in families and in communities. These cycles run from generation to generation, and become extremely difficult to break.

<sup>5</sup> Family Housing Fund



## WHAT WILL *it* TAKE TO REDUCE DISPARITIES?

ADDRESSING DISPARITIES IN OUR REGION WILL REQUIRE MAJOR, SYSTEMIC POLICY CHANGES and hundreds of small changes in the behavior of organizations and individuals throughout the region. Decisions made everyday by individuals and organizations collectively make a huge impact. This toolkit is intended to encourage some of those small – but significant – actions employers can take to make a difference.



## HOW DO I USE *this* TOOLKIT?

DISPARITIES CUT ACROSS MANY ISSUES – from housing to transportation to childcare – and employers can make a difference in all these areas. The following pages give suggested actions that employers can take in eight issue areas to help address our region's growing socio-economic disparities. The resources listed are representative – not exhaustive. The Itasca Project welcomes suggestions for additional resources (call 612-371-3151).

**For more information about disparities or to have a *Close the Gap* speaker present information to your organization, go to [www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm).**



# INCOME *and* ASSET DEVELOPMENT

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- There is a wide and increasing spread of income levels in the Twin Cities. In 2002, 33 percent of families with two workers and two dependents earned less than the amount needed to meet their basic monthly needs of housing, food, child care and health care.<sup>6</sup>
- Income is closely tied to race. In the Twin Cities, the average black and Latino households earn 52 percent and 69 percent as much as the average white household, respectively.
- The wealth gap is even greater than the income gap. Nationally the median white family has a net worth almost 10 times more than African-Americans and more than 30 times greater than the median Latino family.<sup>7</sup>

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO HELP EMPLOYEES INCREASE THEIR ASSETS:

### ACTION

1. EDUCATE EMPLOYEES about eligibility for federal and state tax credits, and encourage those eligible to claim their tax benefits.
2. PROMOTE FINANCIAL LITERACY among employees by providing self-help materials and sponsoring training.

### RESOURCES

For tools and materials go to Covering All Families: [www.coveringallfamilies.org](http://www.coveringallfamilies.org) and the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota: [www.cdf-mn.org/taxoutreach.htm](http://www.cdf-mn.org/taxoutreach.htm)

For an earned income tax credit outreach kit see the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: [www.cbpp.org/eic2005/index.html](http://www.cbpp.org/eic2005/index.html)

For a listing of financial education materials see the Financial Education Clearinghouse: [www.nefe.org/amexeconfund/clearinghouse.html](http://www.nefe.org/amexeconfund/clearinghouse.html)

For online financial educational materials and tools see the money section of the Twin Cities Beehive: [www.beehivetwincities.org](http://www.beehivetwincities.org) and Help Minnesota Save: [www.helpmnsave.org](http://www.helpmnsave.org)

To sponsor workshops on money management, credit and consumer issues contact Lutheran Social Services: 1-888-577-2227 or e-mail [cccs@lssmn.org](mailto:cccs@lssmn.org)

<sup>6</sup> "The Cost of Living in Minnesota," Jobs Now Coalition    <sup>7</sup> Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances, 2001



## ACTION

## RESOURCES

3. LINK EMPLOYEES to direct assistance such as taxpayer assistance programs and financial counseling.

For free taxpayer assistance for low-income individuals see AccountAbility Minnesota: [www.accountabilitymn.org](http://www.accountabilitymn.org)

For local certified consumer credit counseling services see the National Foundation for Credit Counseling site: [www.debtadvice.org/takethefirststep/locator.html](http://www.debtadvice.org/takethefirststep/locator.html)

4. OFFER SAVINGS PLANS such as a 401(k).

For information about 401(k) plans for small businesses: [www.dol.gov/ebsa](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa). Background information is also available at the 401(k) Center for Employers: [www.401kcenter.com](http://www.401kcenter.com)

5. OFFER EMPLOYEES Individual Development Accounts, a form of matched savings accounts that aids low-income families in building personal assets.

For IDA programs in Minnesota contact United Way's director of basic needs at 612-340-7400 or Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota: [www.minnesotafaim.org](http://www.minnesotafaim.org)

6. ASSESS PAY SCALES and compare with the cost of living in Minnesota.

For a report on the cost of living in Minnesota, and access to a wage and budget calculator see the Jobs Now Coalition: [www.jobsnowcoalition.org](http://www.jobsnowcoalition.org)

For an updated Minnesota salary survey see the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development: [www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/tools/oes.htm](http://www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/tools/oes.htm)

7. INCREASE RELATIONSHIPS with minority-owned vendors.

The Minnesota Minority Supplier Development Council (MMSDC) serves as a conduit between corporate minority supplier development programs and minority-owned businesses: [www.mmsdc.org](http://www.mmsdc.org)

8. SUPPORT MINORITY-LED ENTREPRENEURS through management assistance and access to your employee benefits.

MEDA provides assistance to businesses owned and managed by ethnic minorities: [www.meda.net](http://www.meda.net)



# HOUSING

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- The region’s dramatic growth in property values has made affordable housing a major issue. Housing stability is a strong predictor of performance in school and reliability on the job.
- The Twin Cities has the highest white home ownership rate in the country (76 percent), but the rate for households of color (41 percent) is below the national average.
- If current trends continue, by 2010 there will be 22,000 more low-income families than available, affordable housing units.<sup>8</sup>

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE

### TO HELP EMPLOYEES OBTAIN STABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

#### ACTION

1. EDUCATE EMPLOYEES about resources that provide information on tenants’ rights and assistance in working with landlords.
2. OFFER CREDIT COUNSELING services and first-time homebuyer education to employees and customers.

#### RESOURCES

HOME Line is a nonprofit statewide tenant advocacy organization providing free services for tenants: [www.homelinemn.org](http://www.homelinemn.org)

Go to Twin Cities Beehive website for information and referral sources: [www.beehivetwincities.org](http://www.beehivetwincities.org)

The Home Ownership Center’s Home Stretch program offers workshops and individual counseling [www.hocmn.org](http://www.hocmn.org)

ACORN Housing provides mortgage loan counseling and homebuyer classes. Contact [mnacorn@acorn.org](mailto:mnacorn@acorn.org) or 651-642-9639

<sup>8</sup> Family Housing Fund

## **ACTION**

3. PARTNER WITH LOCAL NON-PROFITS and landlords to rehabilitate or create affordable housing near your workplace.
4. DEVELOP AN EMPLOYER-ASSISTED housing program that includes rental deposit assistance, a revolving loan fund, or other financial assistance.

## **RESOURCES**

Contact Greater Twin Cities United Way for a list of community based nonprofit organizations: 612-340-7400 or [www.unitedwaytwincities.org](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org)

To learn more about workforce housing, see the Bulletin Email Newsletter: [www.housingminnesota.org](http://www.housingminnesota.org) or go to Greater Minnesota Housing Fund: [www.gmhf.com](http://www.gmhf.com)

Contact Greater Minnesota Housing Fund: [www.gmhf.com](http://www.gmhf.com)

For suggested guidelines on screening, management and administration, contact Central Community Housing Trust: [www.ccht.org](http://www.ccht.org)



# UNEMPLOYMENT *and* UNDEREMPLOYMENT

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- Stable employment is critical to economic security. Unemployment rates are tied to all three types of disparities - race, class, and place. For example, there is nearly a full point difference in the unemployment rate between the city and the suburbs.<sup>9</sup>
- For those who are employed, underemployment can be a major issue – 20 percent of Latino workers are in management occupations versus 40 percent of white workers.<sup>10</sup>

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE

### TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ADVANCEMENT:

#### ACTION

#### RESOURCES

1. **PARTNER WITH JOB-TRAINING programs that strengthen opportunities for low-income and lower-skilled workers to succeed.**

Contact Greater Twin Cities United Way for a list of job training programs: 612-340-7400

Jobs for the Future seeks to accelerate the educational and economic advancement of struggling youth and adults: [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)

2. **AUDIT HIRING PRACTICES for screens and barriers that inadvertently impact certain populations.**

Employers Association, Inc. can help you consider the relevance and accessibility of your hiring practices and job requirements:

[www.employersinc.com](http://www.employersinc.com)

3. **CREATE APPRENTICESHIPS, mid-career internships, and management training programs.**

The Minnesota Workforce Center offers a wide range of services to help businesses build their workforce: [www.mnwfc.org](http://www.mnwfc.org)

Management training programs are offered by the University of Minnesota: [www.umn.edu](http://www.umn.edu) and most of the higher education institutions in our region.

<sup>9</sup> HUD State of the Cities database <sup>10</sup> Brookings Institution

## **ACTION**

## **RESOURCES**

4. DEVELOP A MENTORING PROGRAM for high-potential minority employees.

MENTTIUM Corporation offers mentoring programs to organizations and individuals: [www.menttium.com](http://www.menttium.com)

5. ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS for the hiring and promotion of minority employees.

For information on how to develop an affirmative action plan: [www.humanrights.state.mn.us/employer\\_affract.html](http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us/employer_affract.html)

For a variety of affirmative action resources: [www.hr-guide.com/data/074.htm](http://www.hr-guide.com/data/074.htm)

6. HIRE IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONALS and support retraining efforts.

Contact the International Institute of Minnesota at: [www.iimn.org](http://www.iimn.org)

7. REEXAMINE HIRING POLICIES toward job seekers with a criminal record. Evaluate relevance of offence to job requirements and company needs.

To find out more or register for a continuing legal education program go to [www.crimeandjustice.org](http://www.crimeandjustice.org) or contact the African American Men Project at 612-302-4762



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- Early childhood education is a critical issue for two reasons: 1) access to affordable childcare is critical for parents to find and keep a job, and 2) access to quality childcare is critical for preparing children for school and life success.
- In a statewide study, students in the lowest income quintile were more than twice as likely to be unprepared for kindergarten as students in the highest income quintile.
- Quality can make the difference. A recent Department of Human Services study indicated that twice as many children in quality, accredited centers were rated as ready for kindergarten than their counterparts in other settings.

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE

### TO INCREASE ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:

#### ACTION

#### RESOURCES

1. OFFER CHILDCARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SERVICES for employees.

Information and advice for parents on their childcare options can be found at Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network: [www.mnchildcare.org](http://www.mnchildcare.org)

For information and referrals about childcare call United Way 2-1-1: [www.211unitedway.org](http://www.211unitedway.org)

2. PROVIDE CHILDCARE BENEFITS for employees and inform them of their childcare financial aid options.

For a report on model programs and policies, see the Corporate Voices for Working Families, Low Wage Best Practices Report: [www.cvworkingfamilies.org](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org)

For an overview of dependent care assistance plans and an expense sheet, see the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network: [www.mnchildcare.org/businesses/dependent.php](http://www.mnchildcare.org/businesses/dependent.php)

For an overview of financial aid options for parents, visit Minnesota Child Care Financial Aid: [www.childcarefinancialaid.org](http://www.childcarefinancialaid.org)

## **ACTION**

3. OFFER FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS, family leave and time-off policies, and support use by employees.
  
4. DIRECTLY SUPPORT and utilize community childcare programs.
  
5. OFFER PARENTING SUPPORT GROUPS and classes; link employees and their families with family support centers and other parenting resources.
  
6. PROMOTE FAMILY LITERACY.

## **RESOURCES**

For a report on model programs and policies, including flexible scheduling and leaves, see the Corporate Voices for Working Families, Low Wage Best Practices Report: [www.cvworkingfamilies.org](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org)

For a flexible work arrangements guide see the Families and Work Institute: [www.familiesandwork.org/3w/tips/index.html](http://www.familiesandwork.org/3w/tips/index.html)

For ideas and models of how to support and use community programs see the Chicago Metropolis 2020 report “Childcare Solutions for Your Employees”:  
[www.chicagometropolis2020.org/25\\_3.htm](http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org/25_3.htm)

For more information regarding Minnesota childcare business partnerships contact Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network:  
[www.mnchildcare.org/network/programs.php](http://www.mnchildcare.org/network/programs.php)

For a listing of parenting support groups and classes in the Twin Cities contact United Way 2-1-1:  
[www.211unitedway.org](http://www.211unitedway.org)

For parenting tips refer employees to  
[www.bornlearning.org](http://www.bornlearning.org)

For “Tips for Reading with Your Children” in multiple languages, and other bilingual family literacy resources see the Minnesota Humanities Commission:  
[www.minnesotahumanities.org/Literacy/tips.htm](http://www.minnesotahumanities.org/Literacy/tips.htm)

Contact your local library for help improving reading among your employees and their children. Find links to your local library at [www.metronet.lib.mn.us/index.cfm](http://www.metronet.lib.mn.us/index.cfm)



# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- Educational attainment is one of the best predictors of economic success.
- Educational performance varies dramatically by race and income. These disparities begin before children enter kindergarten and persist throughout their educational years and into higher education.
- Experts predict that by 2020, Minnesota will produce over 12,000 fewer B.A. degrees than needed every year to meet workforce demands.<sup>12</sup>

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE

### TO DEVELOP A BETTER-EDUCATED CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE:

#### ACTION

#### RESOURCES

1. **PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS and offer financial or management assistance, in-kind donations and tutoring support.**

Achieve!Minneapolis can help your business start or strengthen a school partnership.  
[www.achieveminnneapolis.org](http://www.achieveminnneapolis.org)

To partner with St. Paul schools contact school coordinator Kris Emerson: [kris.emerson@spps.org](mailto:kris.emerson@spps.org) or [www.sppsfoundation.org](http://www.sppsfoundation.org)

2. **ENCOURAGE TUTORING, homework assistance and mentoring partnerships at the workplace.**

Achieve!Minneapolis coordinates a workplace-tutoring program in Minneapolis:  
[www.achieveminnneapolis.org](http://www.achieveminnneapolis.org)

Volunteer with the St. Paul Public Schools at [www.spps.org/volunteer](http://www.spps.org/volunteer)

Match employees to students in need of mentors. Contact The Mentoring Partnership of MN:  
[www.mentoringworks.org](http://www.mentoringworks.org)

3. **OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS to employees, their children and other students in need.**

Scholarship America designs and manages scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs:  
[www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org)

<sup>12</sup> MN Private College Research Foundation



## **ACTION**

## **RESOURCES**

4. OFFER EMPLOYEE EDUCATION ASSISTANCE (GED to graduate school) by providing financial support and time allowances.

5. PROVIDE INTERNSHIP and summer job opportunities for high school students.

6. HELP EMPLOYEES NAVIGATE the education system, decide which school is best for their child, plan and pay for college, etc.

Contact Achieve!Minneapolis to participate in the STEP UP program: [www.achievinneapolis.org](http://www.achievinneapolis.org)

Contact the Itasca Project for St. Paul opportunities 612-371-3151

To help parents find information about a wide range of education issues, go to the Twin Cities Beehive and click on School: [www.beehivetwincities.org](http://www.beehivetwincities.org) or call United Way 2-1-1



# HEALTH CARE

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- Income-based disparities exist on nearly every health indicator – from low birth weight to asthma to life expectancy.<sup>13</sup>
- The rising cost of healthcare is a significant economic problem for employers and employees – both in terms of ability to pay for their own care and the increasing burden on taxpayers to support the growing public program enrollment.

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THEIR EMPLOYEES:

### ACTION

### RESOURCES

1. DESIGN FLEXIBLE BENEFIT PLANS to maximize healthcare dollars for all employees.

The Minnesota Health Information Clearinghouse provides information and publications on health coverage options: [www.health.state.mn.us/clearinghouse/resources.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/clearinghouse/resources.htm)

The State of Minnesota’s Guide to Small Employer Health Plan Market can be found at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpsc/msc/smallmarkt.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpsc/msc/smallmarkt.htm)

2. WORK WITH YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE PROVIDER to offer culturally competent health services.

Refer to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care: [www.omhrc.gov/clas/finalcultural1a.htm](http://www.omhrc.gov/clas/finalcultural1a.htm)

To find out more about accessing health insurance among Somali, American Indian and Hmong communities in Minnesota, see Health Insurance Access Report: [www.crosshealth.com](http://www.crosshealth.com)

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Socio-economic Status and Health Chart Book, 1998

## **ACTION**

## **RESOURCES**

3. PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL AND WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES and incentives for employees.

For information about a wide range of health and fitness issues, go to the Twin Cities Beehive and click on Health: [www.beehivetwincities.org](http://www.beehivetwincities.org)

Your health plan should also have resources to promote wellness.

4. HELP CONNECT EMPLOYEES and their families to state and federal health programs and increase access to care.

For tools to determine eligibility and to find application forms go to [www.coveringallfamilies.org](http://www.coveringallfamilies.org)

Refer employees to United Way 2-1-1 for information and referrals about health care.



# TRANSPORTATION

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- As jobs increasingly move to the suburbs and away from the region's low-income populations, transportation access is increasingly important.
- Approximately 19 percent of central city households do not have access to a vehicle.<sup>14</sup>

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO REDUCE TRANSPORTATION ISSUES FOR EMPLOYEES:

### ACTION

### RESOURCES

1. PROVIDE TRANSIT BENEFITS for employees. Transit benefits may be employer paid, employee paid pre-tax, or shared cost.

For an overview and guide to Minnesota employer transit services see the Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization: [www.mplstmo.org](http://www.mplstmo.org) and Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization: [www.saintpaulparking.com](http://www.saintpaulparking.com)

The Best Workplaces for Commuters provides employer tools and resources, including commuter benefit briefs at: [www.bwc.gov/index.htm](http://www.bwc.gov/index.htm)

For information about discounting bus passes (Metropass) or flexible savings for employers (TransitWorks!) go to: [www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org)

2. CONSIDER EMPLOYEES WHO ARE RELIANT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION when determining worksite location and design.

Locate jobs where they are accessible to public transportation, near services, and provide on-site services.

Saint Paul Port Authority helps businesses by redeveloping sites in the city: [www.sppa.com](http://www.sppa.com)

<sup>14</sup> Brookings Institution

## **ACTION**

## **RESOURCES**

- 
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>3. OPERATE EMPLOYEE SHUTTLE SERVICES from central city locations, public transportation hubs, and between company sites.</p>        | <p>Contact the Community Transportation Association of America's Peer-to-Peer Network: <a href="http://www.ctaa.org">www.ctaa.org</a></p>   |
| <p>4. SUPPORT AND HELP PLAN FOR REVERSE-COMMUTE SHUTTLE SERVICES between low-income neighborhoods and suburban employment centers.</p> | <p>For information on the reverse commute program see the Linking People to the Workplace Toolkit by Community Transportation Association of America: <a href="http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/toolkit/index.asp">www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/toolkit/index.asp</a></p>  |
| <p>5. OFFER VARIABLE WORK HOURS to allow more flexibility and reduce commuter time.</p>  | <p>For an overview of variable work hours see Victoria Transport Policy Institute Encyclopedia: <a href="http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm15.htm">www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm15.htm</a></p> <p>See the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for "Variable Work Hours: An Implementation Guide for Employers," Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, 1999: <a href="http://www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/eco/vwh_handbook.pdf">www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/eco/vwh_handbook.pdf</a></p> |
| <p>6. COORDINATE CAR POOL and van pool programs for employees.</p>   | <p>Commuter Benefit Briefs provide a comprehensive summary of car pool and van pool programs: <a href="http://www.bwc.gov/employ/benefits.htm">www.bwc.gov/employ/benefits.htm</a></p> <p>See <a href="http://www.metrocommuterservices.org">www.metrocommuterservices.org</a> for local car pool and van pool information and consultation</p>   |
| <p>7. HELP EMPLOYEES GAIN ACCESS TO RELIABLE CARS if public transit does not meet their needs.</p>                                     | <p>Contact Greater Twin Cities United Way for information about car loan programs for working families: <a href="http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org">www.unitedwaytwincities.org</a> or 612-340-7400</p>  |



# CULTURAL BARRIERS *and* RACISM

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- The Twin Cities is experiencing a resurgence in immigration—particularly in the core cities and inner ring suburbs.
- Approximately 40 percent of St. Paul kindergartners were English Language Learners (ELL) in the 2000-2001 school years. ELL students in the Minneapolis public schools speak more than 80 languages.<sup>15</sup>
- Research by our community foundations and others suggests that racism – toward new immigrants and long-time residents—continues to be a real factor in achieving economic success in the region.

## ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO REDUCE CULTURAL BARRIERS:

### ACTION

1. EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ABOUT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES and new immigrant cultures. Provide customized training to new immigrant employees.
2. ELICIT SUPPORT and commitment to diversity efforts from the highest levels of management.

### RESOURCES

For help implementing cultural education programs see the MultiCultural Development Center: [www.mcdc.org/services.html](http://www.mcdc.org/services.html)

For a diversity business toolkit see the Diversity Council: [www.diversitycouncil.org/toolkit.shtml](http://www.diversitycouncil.org/toolkit.shtml)

To receive a copy of “Finding Common Understanding: An Employer’s Guide to a Cross-Cultural Workplace,” from the International Institute of Minnesota go to: [www.iimn.org](http://www.iimn.org)

For best practices and list of advocacy organizations: [www.fcc.gov/DiversityFAC/121004/best\\_practices/best\\_practices.doc](http://www.fcc.gov/DiversityFAC/121004/best_practices/best_practices.doc)

<sup>15</sup> Brookings Institution; Metro Trendwatch

## ACTION

3. ADDRESS RACISM OPENLY through an organizational dialogue on the effects of racism.
  
4. PARTICIPATE IN SUPPLIER DIVERSITY PROGRAMS designed to give minority-owned businesses greater access to opportunities.
  
5. OFFER MULTILINGUAL employee and recruitment training.
  
6. PROVIDE ONSITE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER CLASSES or connect employees to community resources.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. CREATE AND SUPPORT employee resource groups.

## RESOURCES

For a model of cross-cultural dialogues in the workplace, go to United Way: [www.unitedwaytwincities.org/impact/CulturalComp.cfm](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org/impact/CulturalComp.cfm)

Facing Race, a Saint Paul Foundation initiative, offers tools at: [www.saintpaulfoundation.org/impact/racism](http://www.saintpaulfoundation.org/impact/racism)

The Minnesota Minority Supplier Development Council serves as a conduit between corporate minority supplier development programs and minority owned businesses: [www.mmsdc.org](http://www.mmsdc.org)

For tips on how to contract for translation services see the University of Minnesota: [www.umn.edu/umcf/resource/translat.html](http://www.umn.edu/umcf/resource/translat.html)

Contact United Way 2-1-1 or see the Twin Cities Beehive for a listing of community resources: [www.beehivetwincities.org](http://www.beehivetwincities.org)

For an overview of Workplace English Language programs in Minnesota see the McKnight Foundation report, “Minnesota’s Future Workforce”: [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org)

See the St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium Workforce Education program for onsite assistance to businesses: [www.spclc.org/Workforce\\_Education.html](http://www.spclc.org/Workforce_Education.html)

For information on 3M’s Employee Resource Groups go to: [www.3m.com/about3m/diversity/employeeegroups.jhtml](http://www.3m.com/about3m/diversity/employeeegroups.jhtml)

# OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

## 1. CREATE AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- Provide an employee resource for addressing barriers related to non-work issues such as housing, daycare, health, etc. Involve your employees in the program design.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports, “All published studies indicate that employee assistance programs are cost-effective” through reduced turnover; decreased absenteeism, tardiness and sick leave; reduced risk of litigation; increased productivity and employee satisfaction; increased supervisor effectiveness; and decreased risk of workplace violence.

## 2. DIRECT PHILANTHROPIC RESOURCES TOWARD EFFORTS TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

- Company Donations: Direct more organizational giving toward programs addressing disparity issues.
- Employee Donations: Encourage increased employee giving by operating workplace giving programs through United Way, educating employees on giving options, and matching employee gifts.

## 3. COMMIT EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER TIME TOWARD EFFORTS TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

- Group projects: Encourage group projects by setting internal volunteerism goals, and designating responsibility for meeting goals. Contact Greater Twin Cities United Way’s Caring Connection.
- Individual volunteerism: Encourage increased individual employee volunteerism by posting opportunities (Volunteer Match can provide web listings), allowing time off, rewarding service, and educating employees about the impact of volunteerism.

## 4. SUPPORT PUBLIC POLICY CHANGES TO REDUCE DISPARITIES

- Active business community engagement on policy issues not directly tied to business can have a significant impact.
- The Brookings Report titled “Mind the Gap” provides a high-level policy framework for addressing disparities. The report is available at [www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm).

## 5. EDUCATE YOUR EMPLOYEES ON DISPARITIES ISSUES

- Speakers: Bring in a speaker from the “Close the Gap” speakers bureau. Register at [www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org/closethegap.cfm).
- Experiential learning: Send high-potential employees to participate in Urban Adventures.



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# STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

AS A TWIN CITIES EMPLOYER, I AM COMMITTED TO HELPING ADDRESS SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN THE REGION.

Toward that end, in the next 18 months, I will work to implement at least five of the *Close the Gap* recommendations in this toolkit.

- Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Your Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_
- Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fax to 612-371-3131 or mail to:

Close the Gap  
c/o The Itasca Project  
3800 IDS Tower  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Please check here if you do not want to have your name and company listed in public materials.

