

Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010



Crittenton
Women's Union | live
work
thrive



Crittenton Women's Union

March 2010



Crittenton Women's Union transforms the course of low-income women's lives so that they can attain economic independence and create better futures for themselves and their families.

We accomplish this by:

- Providing safe housing, caring supports, education, and training programs;
- Innovating new programmatic designs based on research and client experience;
- Using this knowledge and experience to shape public policy and achieve social change.

MASSACHUSETTS ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE INDEX 2010

Crittenton Women's Union

March 2010

Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010 by Geographic Area (With Representative Family Types)			
Jurisdiction	1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Preschooler 1 School-age	2 Adults 1 Preschooler 1 School-age
Massachusetts	\$27,084	\$61,618	\$68,751
Barnstable County	\$24,696	\$58,012	\$64,490
Berkshire County	\$20,217	\$49,212	\$55,866
Bristol County	\$23,753	\$54,037	\$60,731
City of Boston	\$28,717	\$62,421	\$68,235
Dukes County	\$29,802	\$62,189	\$68,632
Essex County	\$28,361	\$63,921	\$70,858
Franklin County	\$19,991	\$48,874	\$55,286
Hampden County	\$20,272	\$49,673	\$56,347
Hampshire County	\$20,034	\$49,388	\$55,808
Middlesex County	\$29,635	\$67,783	\$75,111
Nantucket County	\$36,089	\$67,417	\$73,731
Norfolk County	\$30,203	\$68,021	\$75,347
Plymouth County	\$29,178	\$63,164	\$70,693
Suffolk County	\$30,750	\$64,922	\$72,673
Worcester County	\$21,358	\$54,859	\$61,473

INTRODUCTION

Crittenton Women’s Union (CWU) takes a pioneering approach to helping low-income women attain economic independence for themselves and their families. In addition to providing direct services and advocating for social policy changes, CWU conducts independent research into the barriers these women face in gaining economic security.

Documenting the actual costs families face in Massachusetts gives those working towards economic self-sufficiency—and those who help them—an essential tool. In 2006, CWU released the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS) calculating the costs of basic needs in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010 (Mass. Index) replaces FESS, using a revised methodology.¹

The Mass. Index is a measure of how much income various family types across the Commonwealth require to meet their most basic expenses—housing, utilities, food, basic transportation, child care, health care, clothing, essential personal and household items, and taxes—without public or private assistance.

In 2010, a family of one adult, one preschooler, and one school-age child residing in Massachusetts requires \$61,618 per year (\$29.01 per hour) to achieve economic independence—approximately three and one-half times the federal poverty level of \$18,310.

No matter where in Massachusetts he or she lives, even a single adult without children working full time and earning the minimum wage (\$8.00 per hour; \$16,900 per year)² cannot cover his or her basic living expenses. To be economically self-sufficient, a single adult in Massachusetts requires an income of \$27,084, 60% higher than minimum wage.

The Mass. Index does not include in its calculation of basic expenses any goods or services—restaurant meals, gifts, electronics, recreation, vacations, etc.—that do not contribute directly to health, safety, or earnings. Neither does it include the assets—emergency savings, retirement savings, education savings, or an owned home—that provide economic security for an increasingly small number of Massachusetts residents.

The Mass. Index suggests low-income families’ next necessary step in their path toward attaining economic

Table 1: Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010 Hourly/Annual Wages for Four Family Types in Selected Towns and Cities

City/Town		1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Preschooler	1 Adult 1 Preschooler 1 Schoolage	2 Adults 1 Preschooler 1 Schoolage*	MA Minimum Wage (2010)
Massachusetts (Avg.)	per hour	\$12.83	\$23.05	\$29.01	\$16.18	\$8.00 per hour
	per year	\$27,084	\$49,037	\$61,618	\$34,376	
Boston (City of Boston)	per hour	\$13.60	\$23.06	\$29.56	\$16.15	
	per year	\$28,717	\$48,706	\$62,421	\$34,118	
Barnstable (Barnstable County)	per hour	\$11.69	\$21.86	\$27.47	\$15.27	
	per year	\$24,696	\$46,179	\$58,012	\$32,245	
Gloucester (Essex County)	per hour	\$13.43	\$23.98	\$30.27	\$16.78	
	per year	\$28,361	\$50,648	\$63,921	\$35,429	
Lowell (Middlesex County)	per hour	\$14.03	\$25.92	\$32.09	\$17.78	
	per year	\$29,635	\$54,737	\$67,783	\$37,556	
New Bedford (Bristol County)	per hour	\$11.25	\$19.97	\$25.59	\$14.38	
	per year	\$23,753	\$42,178	\$54,037	\$30,366	
North Adams (Berkshire County)	per hour	\$9.57	\$17.83	\$23.30	\$13.23	
	per year	\$20,217	\$37,647	\$49,212	\$29,826	
Springfield (Hampden County)	per hour	\$9.60	\$18.25	\$23.52	\$13.34	
	per year	\$20,272	\$38,540	\$49,673	\$28,174	
Worcester (Worcester County)	per hour	\$10.11	\$19.80	\$25.98	\$14.55	
	per year	\$21,358	\$41,810	\$54,849	\$30,737	

* Wage per adult

security based on good incomes, employment-based benefits, and the accumulation of assets. Mass. Index wages are attainable by those who are, or who can become through education and training, middle-skill workers. (For a list of high-in-demand jobs that pay family-sustaining Mass. Index wages, see CWU's *Hot Jobs 2010: Promoting Economic Independence Through Informed Career Decisions* online at www.liveworkthrive.org.)

Mass. Index values are calculated at the state and county levels and for the City of Boston (see **Table 1** on page 2 for a representative listing of regions). Unlike less precise measures of economic well-being or deprivation, such as the federal poverty level (FPL), the Mass. Index captures the local variance in markets and prices that determines current and prospective wage adequacy. Mass. Index budgets are specific to family composition, presenting expenses and economic independence wages for 410 family types consisting of one or two adults and up to six children within four age categories—infant, preschooler, school-age child, and teenager. Mass. Index values for adults are not age-specific, and are applicable to any independent working adult.³

The Mass. Index assumes that all adults work full time, regardless of family size and type. As a result, adults incur work-related expenses such as child care and commuting transportation costs. All children younger than 14 require before- and after-school care, and children not attending school require full-time care. Workers are assumed to

participate in employer-sponsored health insurance. As an addendum, the Mass. Index also presents, for selected family types, health care expenses of those who lack employer-sponsored health insurance.⁴

The Mass. Index is a deliberate measure of the income families require if they are to achieve a fair standard of housing, nutrition, etc. and avoid dependence on public income or work supports, such as subsidized housing or nutrition assistance (see **Table 2** below for a full listing of Mass. Index expenses). The Mass. Index draws upon public federal, state, and market-rate data. No public income or work supports or other direct subsidies are included in the Mass. Index, and expenses reflect full market prices. (For more information on the Mass. Index methodology, see CWU's *Methodology for the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010* online at www.liveworkthrive.org.)

For a single adult living in a one-bedroom apartment, rent and utilities consume 44% of the Mass. Index budget. For a single parent of a preschooler and school-age child, the composition of a Mass. Index budget is quite different. As shown in **Figure 1** on page 4, rent and utilities comprise only 22% of the Index. The family of three living in a two-bedroom apartment spends more than a single adult for housing, but their largest expense is still child care, 31% of the Mass. Index budget. Interestingly, the households pay the same proportion of their income for food and health care (assuming employer-sponsored health insurance)—11% and 8% respectively.

Table 2: Statewide Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010 Average Basic Expenses for Four Family Types				
Monthly Expenses	1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Preschooler	1 Adult 1 Preschooler 1 School-age	2 Adults 1 Preschooler 1 School-age
Housing	\$795	\$954	\$954	\$954
Utilities	\$193	\$232	\$232	\$232
Child Care	\$0	\$996	\$1,576	\$1,576
Food	\$259	\$378	\$559	\$748
Transportation	\$165	\$188	\$188	\$350
Personal & Household Needs	\$288	\$361	\$403	\$447
Health Care	\$175	\$287	\$412	\$493
Taxes	\$382	\$829	\$1,077	\$1,196
Tax Credits*	\$0	(\$138)	(\$267)	(\$267)
Mass. Index Wage, Hourly	\$12.83	\$23.05	\$29.01	\$16.18**
Mass. Index Wage, Monthly	\$2,257	\$4,086	\$5,135	\$2,865**
Mass. Index Wage, Annual	\$27,084	\$49,037	\$61,618	\$68,751

* Earned Income Credit (EIC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC), Child and Dependent Care Credit (CDCC), and any applicable Massachusetts state tax credits. ** Wage per adult

THE RISING COSTS FACED BY MASSACHUSETTS FAMILIES

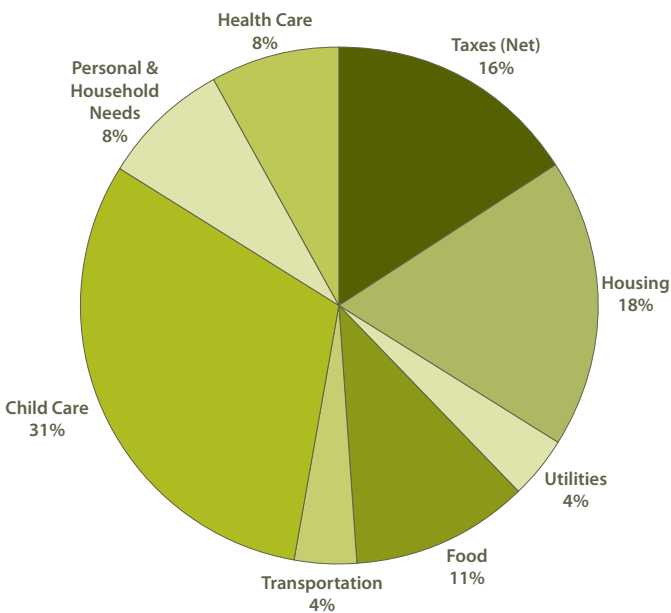
In recent years, all Mass. Index expenses have increased. Some increases, such as in housing and child care, have varied greatly across the state, while other increases, such as in transportation, have varied much less.

- **Rent:** Since 2006, rents have increased greatly in some areas of Massachusetts and remained largely unchanged, or even decreased, in others. Between 2006 and 2009, rents in Berkshire County increased 25%, while Fair Market Rents in Boston increased just 1.6% over the three-year period and decreased between 2007 and 2009.⁵
- **Food:** Since 2006, food expenses for a family of four (two adults with two school-age children) have increased 15.4%.⁶
- **Transportation:** Between 2006 and 2008, the average cost of owning and driving a small sedan increased 9%. Between 2006 and 2009, regular gasoline prices in Massachusetts increased by just 3%, from \$2.42 to

\$2.49. During the period, however, the price of gasoline, which comprises nearly 50% of total average Mass. Index driving expenses, ranged greatly, from a low of \$1.60 (December 2008) to a high of \$4.06 (July 2008).⁷

- **Child Care:** Between 2006 and 2008, child care costs in Massachusetts increased by an average of 10%. Costs varied greatly by place, age of child, and type of care. The average cost of family child care (care provided in a family home) for children under two years of age in the Boston suburbs increased most, 22%, while the cost of family child care for children over two in Boston and northeastern Massachusetts did not increase at all. While care in a child care center is still more costly than family care, center care saw less dramatic, though significant, increases, from a high of 17% for an infant in the Boston suburbs to a low of 8.1% for a preschooler in southeastern Massachusetts. After-school care saw increases from 0% in northeastern Massachusetts to 18.6% in southeastern Massachusetts.
- **Health Care:** Between 2006 and 2008, among employees covered by employer-sponsored health insurance, average total employee contributions for single coverage increased 9.8%. Average total employee contributions for family coverage increased by 7.5%. While health insurance coverage in Massachusetts exceeded 97% in 2009, the percentage of employees eligible for their employers' health insurance plans fell by 1.5% between 2006 and 2008.⁸ Massachusetts residents paid more than residents of any other state for family coverage, typically 14-15% of median household income.⁹

Figure 1: Statewide Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010 Proportions for a Single Parent with a Preschooler and School-age Child



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009 HHS Poverty Guidelines (values inflated using the Consumer Price Index).

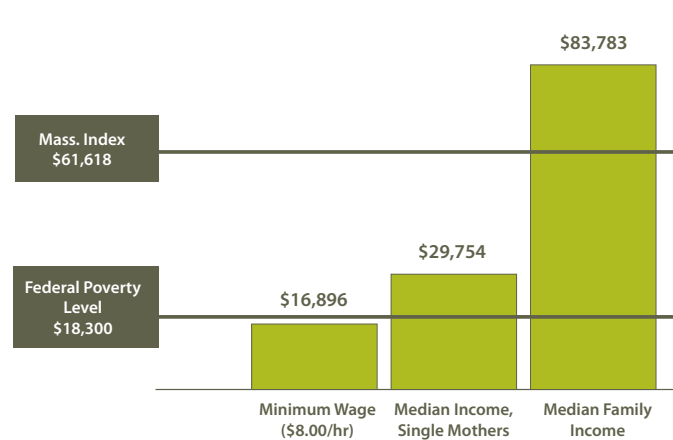
INCOMES OF MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN COMPARED TO THE MASS. INDEX

Unfortunately for Massachusetts workers, costs have increased while Massachusetts unemployment has risen to its highest rate in 33 years. Massachusetts has lost approximately 100,000 jobs since 2006, according to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The fact that earnings for employed workers stagnated between 2001 and 2008 has made it difficult for low-wage workers to attain a family-sustaining wage. Rising costs, unemployment, and stagnant wages are especially detrimental to women, who

are disproportionately poor; in 2006, almost three-quarters of all Massachusetts families living in poverty were headed by single women.

As demonstrated by **Figure 2** below, single heads of households, disproportionately women, face the greatest challenge in achieving Mass. Index incomes. Median income for single mothers, which has fallen in recent years, falls well short of CWU thresholds for single adults raising children. Unequal pay and occupational segregation diminish women’s opportunities for economic independence. Forty-nine percent of women work in low-

Figure 2: Massachusetts Benchmark Incomes vs. the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index for a Single Mother with a Preschooler and a School-age Child, 2009



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009 HHS Poverty Guidelines (values inflated using the Consumer Price Index).

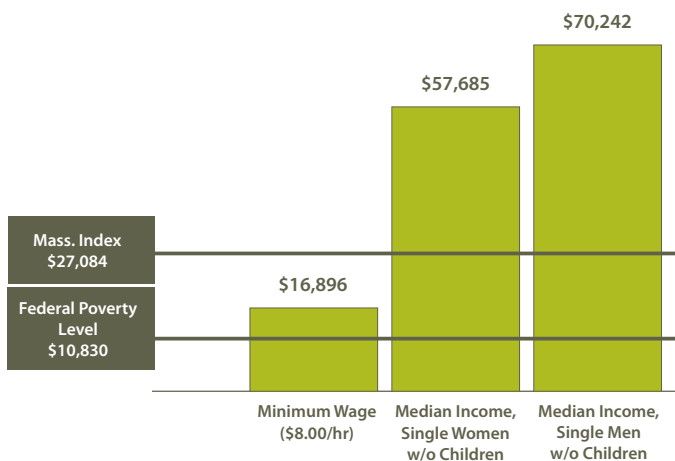
PROMOTING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IN A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

In the Massachusetts economy, post-secondary education and training is all but required for employment that pays Mass. Index family-sustaining wages. As shown in **Figure 4** on page 6, through 2016 the number of positions requiring only work experience or on-the-job training is expected to increase by no more than 5%, while occupations requiring an associate’s degree will grow at triple that rate. When the economy is doing poorly, those with less education fare worst, and adults with no post-secondary education have experienced the greatest overall loss of employment since December 2007.¹² The Massachusetts Department of Labor recently identified approximately 40%

paid, traditionally women’s occupations—retail, service, and administration—which are the largest employers of minimum-wage workers. In 2008, median annual women’s wages in these occupations ranged from \$21,700 to \$30,700, well below Mass. Index thresholds for most family types.¹⁰

The gender wage gap also contributes to many women’s lack of economic independence: In 2006, women workers in Massachusetts earned just 72% as much as men performing the same jobs.¹¹ Only 11 states in the U.S. had larger wage gaps between men and women.

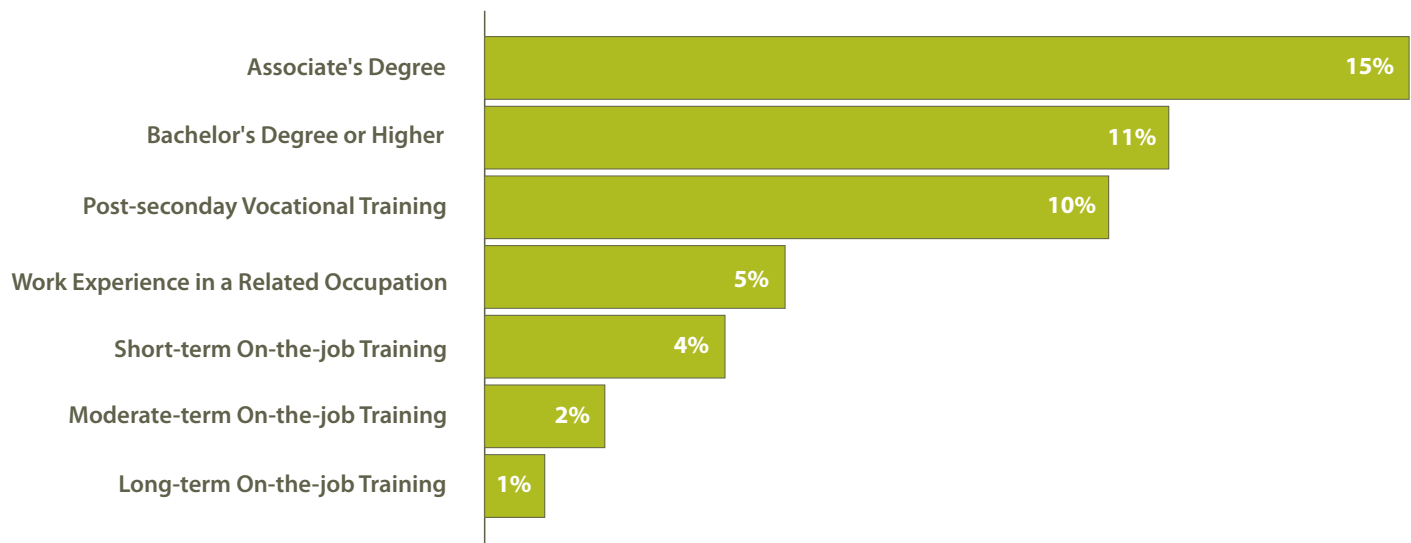
Figure 3: Massachusetts Benchmark Incomes vs. the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index for a Single Worker, 2009



of 50,000 vacant jobs in the state as “middle-skill” level, requiring more than a high school education but less than a four-year degree.

In a 2007 CWU list of Hot Jobs—careers that require two years or less of post-secondary education, pay a family-sustaining Mass. Index wage, and currently post high vacancy rates—16 of 26 jobs required no post-secondary education.¹³ In the 2010 CWU Hot Jobs list, only two jobs require less than an associate’s degree (correctional officers and first-line supervisors of administrative workers). Although these occupations require less than an associate’s degree, post-secondary education, especially for supervisors, increases substantially the chances of obtaining employment and affords greater promotional opportunities.

Figure 4: Massachusetts Job Growth by Level of Education and Training, 2006–2016



Source: Adapted from Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, *Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employment Projections 2006–2016*.

THE INACCESSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Clearly, one of the best anti-poverty strategies is to provide access to higher education and support for educational success for adult students, especially parents. Yet, while state policymakers have long recognized the importance of higher education and training, they have not provided adequate funding and corollary supports to adult students supporting families. Indeed, Massachusetts ranks 49th in its higher education spending as a percentage of state income and 47th in its spending per capita.¹⁴ Thus,

while higher education is becoming an increasingly essential component to promoting economic independence, it is also becoming increasingly unaffordable for many low- and moderate-income families and single adults.

Table 3 below provides average costs—tuition, fees, books, and supplies—faced by the state’s full-time workers who study at local community colleges.¹⁵ Cost calculations include average grants and tax credits amounts available to qualifying low-income students, such as federal Pell Grants, the Lifetime Learning Credit, and the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program.¹⁶ It is important to note, however, that access to assistance is seriously limited for many part-time students: the Lifetime Learning Credit is non-refundable, and therefore not helpful to low-income students who do not earn enough to pay federal income tax (but pay universal Social Security and Medicare taxes); the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program helps only students and families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, an income well below Mass. Index incomes; and the partly refundable Hope tax credit is available only to students who carry at least a half-time course load.

Table 3 measures costs for an adult taking 16.75 credits a year to complete community college within 4 years, paying \$2,241 per year to the community college in tuition and fees. A substantial proportion of community college students are returning students and adult learners, with 44% being older than 24. Because many of these adult learners

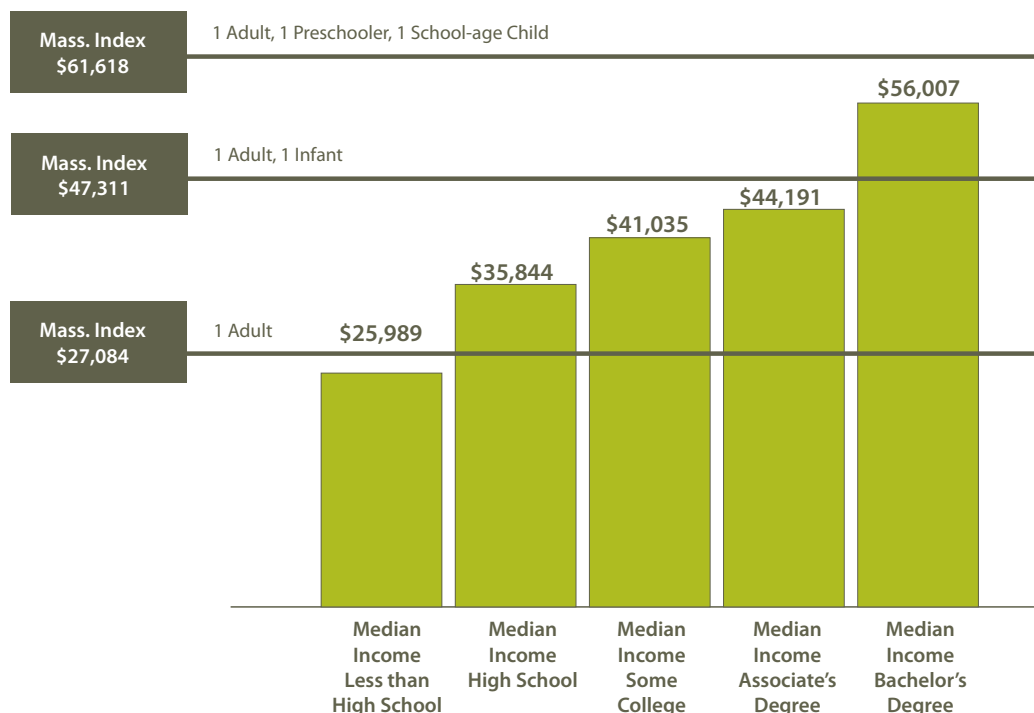
Table 3: Average Cost of an Associate’s Degree for a Part-Time Massachusetts Community College Student, by Family Type, 2009

	1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Infant	1 Adult 1 Infant 1 Preschooler
Tuition and Fees	\$2,241	\$2,241	\$2,241
Less Grants and Credits	(\$711)	(\$711)	(\$711)
Transportation and Child Care	\$312	\$1,840	\$2,935
Total Annual Cost	\$1,842	\$3,370	\$4,465
Total Cost Over 4 Years	\$7,368	\$13,480	\$17,860

are independent adults with at least one child, **Table 3** includes the additional costs faced by adult students who must travel to school and find child care for their children while they attend school.¹⁷ (Crittenton Women’s Union’s

Unlocking the Doors to Higher Education and Training for Massachusetts Working Poor Families provides more in-depth analysis of the financial challenges facing Massachusetts’ community college students.)¹⁸

Figure 5: Massachusetts Economic Independence Index vs. Median Earnings of Massachusetts Adults Ages 25–44, by Education Level, 2009



Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, “Income and Earnings: Difference in Median Earnings Between a High School Diploma and an Associates Degree” (values inflated using the Consumer Price Index).

HOW CWU IS WORKING TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN FAMILIES’ INCOMES AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Since 1998, when The Women’s Union, now CWU, released the first Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard report, the overall cost of living has increased nearly 50% for a family of one adult, one preschooler, and one school-age child in Boston. Further, median incomes in Massachusetts are now lower than they were in 2002. Many women who head families struggle to move out of poverty and toward economic independence. As demonstrated by the data presented above, women need both well-paying jobs and public work supports to make progress toward economic self-sufficiency. To help our clients and low-income women throughout Massachusetts, the Crittenton Women’s Union combines direct services with research and

advocacy to offer a multi-faceted approach to promoting economic independence.

Direct Service Programs

CWU provides emergency shelter for homeless families, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors, and workforce development and training programs for low-income women. No matter what CWU service or program a client enrolls in, she receives mentoring and support in building economic self-sufficiency. CWU recently launched a pilot program, Career Family Opportunity, that works with low-income single parents for five years with the goal that they will obtain a job that pays a family-sustaining wage and have accumulated savings at the completion of the program.

While 19% of CWU clients enter our programs engaged in some form of education and training, 42% of them exit engaged in education or training, according to

CWU's January 2010 outcomes data. Among those exiting, significantly more are working on higher degrees than when they entered. CWU continues to have a powerful, on-the-ground impact on our clients' lives and futures.

Research and Innovation

CWU conducts rigorous research into the economic, political, and social barriers disadvantaged women face in their efforts to gain economic security. Our direct services not only support our clients in their journey to economic independence, but also provide an ongoing source of learning for CWU. This first-hand experience enables us to identify the most expeditious pathways out of poverty. Pilot programs at CWU are evaluated to facilitate future replication. CWU works to connect best practices research to ongoing program improvement and share learning, when possible, with other organizations.

Advocacy

CWU's understanding of the struggles of low-income families and its knowledge of best practices makes it a powerful advocate for public policy and legislation to remove obstacles along the road to economic independence. CWU's advocacy efforts focus on ensuring access to post-secondary education and training and making housing and child care affordable for struggling working families. Post-secondary education and training, affordable housing, and child care remain critical components in building pathways out of poverty.

CWU specific recommendations to help low-income working adults obtain post-secondary education and training include:¹⁹

1. Improve the alignment between education systems (elementary and secondary, adult basic education, and higher education) to promote efficient and successful transition to college.
2. Invest in career counseling, guidance, and support for adult learners.

3. Expand financial aid for adult learners including funding for the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program (line item 7002-1084).
4. Offer two years (or equivalent credit) of free community college for degree or certificate programs with priority given to working adult learners.

CWU is working to secure more state assistance so that working families can afford the high cost of rent and child care in Massachusetts. CWU's recommendations include:

1. Preserve the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) to protect the families currently receiving assistance and increase the number of vouchers when the state economy improves (line item 7004-9024).
2. Maintain level funding for Early Education & Care financial assistance for low-income families (line item 3000-4060).
3. Create subsidized campus-based child care for students at all of the state's community colleges.

Crittenton Women's Union offers the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index as a guide to help families chart their course toward a better future. By calculating what it truly takes to make ends meet in Massachusetts, low-income individuals can develop concrete goals toward economic independence, service providers can better assist their clients by offering informed guidance, and policy makers can develop legislative strategies for promoting more effective and efficient pathways out of poverty.

To find economic independence costs for your town, or for information on how you can get involved in CWU's advocacy efforts, visit www.liveworkthrive.org or call us at 617.259.2936.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *Methodology for the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010* is available online at <http://www.liveworkthrive.org>.
- 2 Mass. Index wage calculations assume year-round, full-time employment of 176 hours per month (8 hours per day for 22 days).
- 3 Many Mass. Index expenses are applicable to working adults 65 and older. However, such older adults are likely to receive Medicare and Social Security benefits, which contradict Mass. Index health care and income assumptions. For information on the income needs of fully retired elders, see Wider Opportunities for Women's Elder Economic Security Standard Index online at <http://www.wowonline.org>.
- 4 For more information on health care costs of those lacking employer-sponsored health insurance, see CWU's *Methodology for the 2010 Massachusetts Economic Independence Index* online at <http://www.liveworkthrive.org>.
- 5 The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually estimates Fair Market Rents (FMRs) for 530 metropolitan areas and 2,045 non-metropolitan county FMR areas. FMRs are rent estimates for privately owned, decent, safe, but modest apartments.
- 6 Mass. Index food expenses are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Low-Cost Food Plan. For details, see *Methodology for the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010* online at <http://www.liveworkthrive.org>.
- 7 U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Retail Gasoline Historic Prices," n.d. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Energy, 2009). Available online at http://www.eia.doe.gov/oil_gas/petroleum/data_publications/wrgp/mogas_history.html.
- 8 Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, "Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Insurance Component State and Metro Area Tables (Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2009). In 2008, 87.6% of Massachusetts' part-time employees worked at firms that offered health insurance. Only 29% of part-time employees were eligible to participate in employer-sponsored plans, and only 13% of part-time employees were enrolled in employer-sponsored insurance. Available online at http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_stats/quick_tables_search.jsp?component=2&subcomponent=2.
- 9 Sharon K. Long and Karen Stockley, *Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Care in Massachusetts: Detailed Tabulations Based on the 2008 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey Urban Institute* (Boston, MA: Commonwealth of Massachusetts March 2009). Available online at http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dhcfp/r/survey/08his_detailed_tabulations.pdf.
- 10 Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Highlight of Women's Earnings in 2008, Annual Averages, 2008, CPS Table 39." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Available online at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswom2008.pdf>.
- 11 Heidi Hartman, Olga Sorokina, and Erica Williams, *The Best and Worst State Economies for Women* (The Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2006). Available online at http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/R334_BWStateEconomies2006.pdf.
- 12 P.E. Harrington and N.P. Fogg, *Some Impacts of the National Economic Crisis on the Massachusetts Labor Market* (Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2009).
- 13 Prior Hot Jobs reports were based on The Family Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS), which was first published by the Women's Union in 1998 and then updated in 2003 and 2006 with partners Dr. Diana Pearce and Wider Opportunities for Women. The Standard provides an alternative to the federal poverty guidelines and is widely used by state agencies and nonprofit organizations. In 2009, Crittenton Women's Union contracted with Wider Opportunities for Women to develop the most updated budget tool, the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index (Mass. Index). More information about FESS and Mass. Index is available at <http://www.liveworkthrive.org>.
- 14 Mary Lassen, *Massachusetts Community Colleges: The Potential for Improving College Attainment* (Boston, MA: The Boston Foundation, 2007).
- 15 An adult typically takes 67 credits over 4 years to meet the requirement of attaining an associate's degree. (Massachusetts Community Colleges, n.d.)
- 16 The Lifetime Learning Credit is a federal tax credit that promotes education and training among adult learners by providing a credit equivalent to 20% of paid tuition and required fees. The Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program is a state program that provides up to \$3,000 to low-income adults and displaced workers if they attend post-secondary educational institutes in high-demand occupation fields. The Educational Reward Grant is available only to students whose family income is below 200% of the federal poverty line. The Hope tax credit provides up to \$1800 a year to students who take at least half the credits a normal full-time student takes.
- 17 In calculating adult education expenses, the Mass. Index assumes that an adult works full time while attending school. In fact, the majority of adult students 24 years old or older work full time and identify themselves primarily as workers, not as students. Economic resources available for an adult's community college education include financial aid (grants) and tax benefits. This cost assumes Massachusetts median family child care rates for infants and preschoolers. The number of hours in care per week is equal to the parent student's number of class (credit) hours.
- 18 Available online at <http://www.liveworkthrive.org>.
- 19 These recommendations are taken from the Crittenton Women's Union report, *Unlocking the Doors to Higher Education and Training for Massachusetts Working Poor Families*, December 2007.



One Washington Mall, 2nd Floor
Boston, MA 02108
Tel: 617.259.2900
www.liveworkthrive.org