

2015 Public Policy Agenda

In order to better prepare Indiana's working families for a more secure economic future, state policies and investments that reflect the economic reality of low- and middle-income Hoosiers are more critical than ever. Policymakers should begin to provide a toolbox for families to restore the promise of economic mobility. This toolbox should: **reward** hard working Hoosiers by ensuring they share in economic growth; **strengthen** work support programs for our most vulnerable citizens and ultimately; **equip** all Hoosiers with the opportunity to obtain the skills necessary in order to attract high-paying, quality jobs that are necessary for a family's economic self-sufficiency. All policy and legislative recommendations on the Institute's 2015 Policy Agenda are based on the culmination of the Institute's analysis of research, data and national best practice models.

Unemployment Insurance

1. Indiana Should Establish a Work Sharing Program. (Legislative)

Work sharing is an unemployment insurance (UI) benefit that explicitly targets job preservation and allows businesses to retain their skilled workforce during times of temporary decreased demand. A work sharing program would allow an employer an option to reduce the hours and wages of all employees or a particular group of workers instead of laying off a portion of the workforce to cut costs. Workers with reduced hours and wages are eligible for partial unemployment benefits to supplement their paycheck. Because work sharing is voluntary, employers can make decisions about participation in the program based on their unique circumstances. For research, news and other legislative activity, please visit: <http://www.incap.org/worksharepage.html>

Addressing the 'Cliff Effect'

2. Indiana Should Smooth Out the 'Cliff Effect' (Legislative/Administrative)

In an effort to solve the unintended consequences in current policy design, and to restore the promise of upward mobility for more families, policymakers can: encourage existing efforts at expanding access to Indiana's most vulnerable children; promise to restore the basic incentive for hard work (a raise equals an increase in net resources) and the incentive of upward mobility, and ultimately; aim to expand the innumerable benefits of high-quality childcare for Hoosier children and for their parents who face an increasingly prohibitive cost to work. For research, resources, news and other information relating to the Cliff Effect, please visit:

<http://www.incap.org/cliffeffect.html>

- Increasing CCDF Exit Income Limit to 250% FPG
- Eliminate TANF and SNAP Asset Limits

Higher Education

3. Increase Financial Aid and Services for Part-Time and Adult Students. (Legislative/Administrative)

Part-time students make up nearly half of the total number of Hoosier students attending post-secondary education in Indiana, but only two percent of the state's financial aid budget is open to these students. 82 percent of adult students attend college part-time and face additional barriers to completion. Because Indiana is facing a substantial skills gap, and the adults currently in the workforce will continue to make up 65 percent of the workforce up through 2020, Indiana must increase its support for adults in post-secondary education. Increased access to financial aid for post-secondary education will be a huge benefit to the 1.8 million Hoosiers aged 18-65 who are in need of skills training, and increased coordination of supportive services is essential to achieving increased educational attainment and higher completion rates.

4. Create an Adult Literacy Tax Credit and Licensing Mechanism (Legislative)

While up to 1,500,000 adults in Indiana have literacy skills below the level necessary to function in their jobs or society, Indiana provides almost no assistance to the state's adult literacy organizations. To help remedy this problem, Indiana should designate a licensing body to define adult literacy organizations in the state and allow donations to them to receive tax credit support on par with donations to colleges & K-12 scholarship funds. The revenues from this tax credit will help provide foundational skills, including occupational and financial literacy that will allow Indiana's low-skilled adults increase opportunities for additional education, skill development, work and income, paying dividends for individuals, families, and the economy.

5. Promote the statewide establishment of Prior Learning Assessments (Administrative)

Support a convening of stakeholders with the intent to establish statewide prior learning assessment (PLA) policies. PLA institutionalizes the practices of assessing prior-learning portfolios produced by adults with significant work experience, awarding academic credit for meritorious portfolios, accepting transfer academic-credit awarded through rigorous review by other institutions, and encouraging viable candidates to undertake the assessment process. By completing a portfolio that includes samples of projects, writing, products or processes they have completed for employers, adults can receive graduation credit either free or at a greatly reduced cost.