

YOU CAN FIND OUT WITH FIRST!

FIRST is a powerful interactive model for tracking the economic well-being of Wisconsin's families as they move from welfare or low-wage work to employment at a range of wage levels. The model shows how a family's income, tax credits or liabilities, and subsidies (child care, health insurance, Food Stamps) change as that family moves from work at the minimum wage to better-paying jobs. Users of FIRST can select any family size and composition for each of Wisconsin's 72 counties. The model shows the itemized cost of living and the point where families "break even." The most exciting element allows users to manipulate tax and subsidy policies to analyze how specific changes will affect Wisconsin's working families.



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Policymakers and planners can explore alternative tax and benefit policies to see how they can improve economic incentives for the working poor.

Case workers and advocates can use FIRST as a budgeting tool for individual families to illustrate exactly how much that family will need to earn to meet their basic expenses and to demonstrate the effects increased earnings will have on a family's receipt of specific subsidies.

FIRST's designers incorporated rules from the Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Stamps, BadgerCare, child care and federal housing assistance programs as well as up-to-date state and federal tax laws.

How the model works:

Pick your FIRST Family and Find Their Basic Needs

FIRST allows you to create numerous family compositions and shows variations in the cost of living in any Wisconsin county. In the example below, we have chosen a family (1 adult, 2 children) that resides in Rock County. Once you've selected a family composition, the model calculates that particular family's "Basic-Needs Budget" so you can get an estimate of that family's monthly expenses.

Monthly Expenses L			
1 Adult and 2 Children (1 Infant 1			
ROCK COUNTY			
Work Scenario	1	2	
Job Type	Unsub. Emp	Unsub. Emp	Un
Hours/Week	40	40	40
Hourly Wage	\$5.35	\$7.00	\$
Food	\$ 337	\$ 337	
Medical Care	\$ 113	\$ 113	
Out of Pocket	\$ 29	\$ 29	
Housing	\$ 552	\$ 552	
Child Care	\$ 1,147	\$ 1,147	
Out of Pocket	\$ 43	\$ 100	
Transportation	\$ 105	\$ 105	
Misc. Necessities	\$ 192	\$ 192	

Partial View of Expenses Detail

Examine The Transition to Self-Sufficiency

Next you can track the "model family's" well-being as they move from no work or low-wage work into employment at higher wage levels. You are able to see exactly where "cliff effects" occur – the wage level where benefits and subsidies are rapidly phased out, leaving the family with less disposable income than at lower earnings levels.

Subsidies Detail			
1 Adult and 2 Children (1 Infant 1			
ROCK COUNTY			
Work Scenario	1	2	
Job Type	Unsub. Emp	Unsub. Emp	Un
Hours/Week	40	40	40
Hourly Wage	\$5.35	\$7.00	\$
W2	\$ 0	\$ 0	
Food Stamps	\$ 247	\$ 169	
BadgerCare/ Private Ins.	\$ 85	\$ 85	
Housing	\$ 0	\$ 0	
Child Care	\$ 1,104	\$ 1,048	
SUBTOTAL	\$ 1,436	\$ 1,302	\$

Partial View of Subsidies Detail

Manipulate Policy Options

You are able to experiment with policy changes to see the impact of various tax- and family-support proposals on your FIRST family. For example, you could make changes to Wisconsin's child care subsidy program and compare the current policy to your proposed change to see how much additional discretionary income such a move brings to that family. You can also experiment with entire packages of policy reforms.

Change the State Policy for Child Care Assistance	
Child Care Assistance Income Eligibility Cut-off: > 200%	
Income as % FPL	Monthly Co-Pay % of Income
100%	8.6%
125%	10.1%
150%	11.1%
175%	11.3%
200%	11.3%
225%	NA
250%	NA

[Return to Summary Table](#)

Partial View of Policy Options

“A powerful tool for everyone who cares about making work pay in Wisconsin. Advocates, legislators and administrators alike can use it to test whether proposed reforms of our benefit and tax system actually help Wisconsin’s workers.”

–David Riemer,
Director of Administration, City of Milwaukee

“This tool makes it clear that earning more doesn’t always pay off... very useful for everyone from policy makers to concerned citizens.”

–Laura Dresser,
Research Director, Center on Wisconsin Strategy

“FIRST will be extremely useful for policy makers to adjust state programs and taxes to insure that work pays for low-income families.”

–Jon Peacock
Budget Project Director, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

“Finally, an easy-to-use and easy-to-understand representation of the challenges families face as they move up the economic ladder.”

–Julie Kerksick,
Executive Director, The New Hope Project

Presentations of the FIRST model are free and are being scheduled for now through this summer. The presentations can be designed specifically for your county.

To schedule a presentation, or to find out when IWF’s Vicky Selkove will be presenting the model in your area, call (414) 384-9094, or e-mail us at iwf@execpc.com

Disk copies of the model will be available for a fee by late May.



THE INSTITUTE FOR WISCONSIN'S FUTURE
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



The Institute for Wisconsin's Future

introduces the

FIRST Model

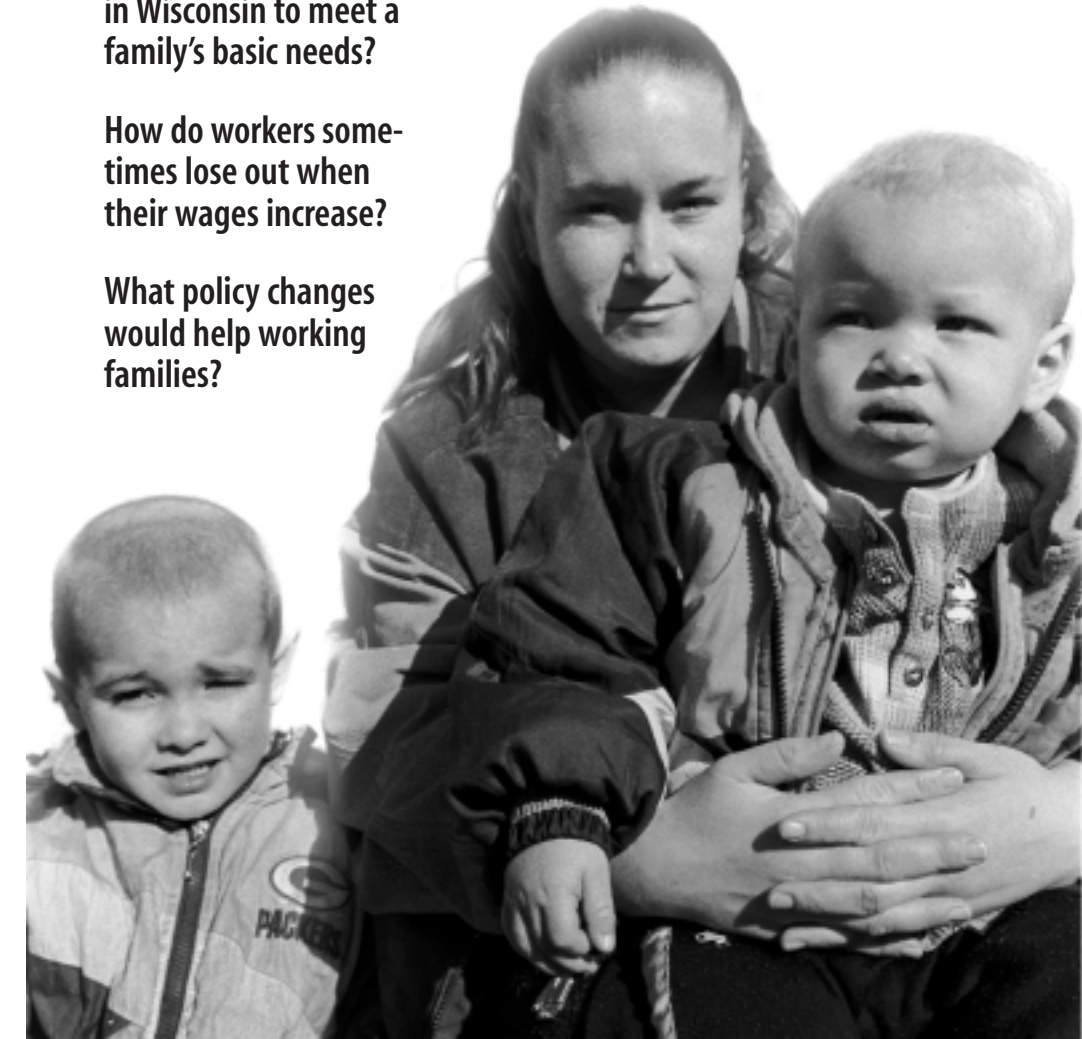
Family Income Resource Simulation Tool

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW...

What income is necessary in Wisconsin to meet a family's basic needs?

How do workers sometimes lose out when their wages increase?

What policy changes would help working families?



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