

# How the Poverty Simulation Works

The Community Action Poverty Simulation breaks down stereotypes by allowing participants to step into the real-life situations of others.

Poverty is often portrayed as a stand-alone issue - but this simulation allows individuals to walk a month in the shoes of someone who is facing poverty and realize how complex and interconnected issues of poverty really are.

- A single parent with limited resources and no transportation must find a way to get to work and get their child to daycare.
- An elderly person must find a way to pay for both utilities and medication.
- A young adult must care for siblings while their parent is incarcerated.
- An elderly couple must raise their grandchildren while managing health and employment issues.

After the experience, individuals have an opportunity to discuss what they've learned with their peers.

The Community Action Poverty Simulation is a tool that helps participants rethink the challenges that millions of low-income individuals must face every day. More importantly, this tool helps people identify areas of change that can directly impact the effects of poverty on individuals, families and communities.



**New York State Community Action Association**  
**2 Charles Blvd.**  
**Guildeland, NY 12084**

Phone: 518-690-0491

The Community Action Poverty Simulation is a profoundly moving experience. It moves people to think about the harsh realities of poverty and to talk about how communities can address the problem. Most importantly, it moves people to make a difference. The Community Action Poverty Simulation is the first step to get people and communities moving.

Some examples of groups who have used the Community Action Poverty Simulation experience include:

- Customer Service Groups
- Health Care Professionals
- Educators
- Clergy and Congregations
- Social Service Providers
- Elected Officials
- Management Staff
- College Students
- Community Organizations
- Corporations



## The Community Action

# POVERTY SIMULATION



## RETHINK POVERTY.



## Living a Month in Poverty

The simulation involves participants who take on the roles of members of up to 26 families, all facing a variety of challenging but typical circumstances.

To start the simulation exercise, each family is given a card explaining its unique circumstances. The families are then tasked to provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities by accessing various community resources during the course of four 15-minute “weeks.”

The Community Action Poverty Simulation is conducted in a large room, with participants seated in family groups in the center, and community resources located around the perimeter. The facilitator opens the simulation with an orientation to the activity, goes over ground rules, and answers participant questions during the exercise.

## Preparing for the Simulation

A minimum of 16 volunteers are needed to run a Poverty Simulation. twenty four volunteers are needed for a simulation with more than 100 participants.

The simulation requires one room with at least 2,000 square feet. A High School gym is ideal.

While a simulation can be held with as few as 50 participants, our kit can accommodate as many as 150.

## Schedule a Simulation

NYSCAA staff will work with you to plan and coordinate your event. Our staff will bring all simulation materials and props and will conduct an orientation for all volunteers immediately prior to the event. We will work with you to create a successful and effective experience that fits the needs of your agency.

## The Event

On the day of the event, volunteers will attend a brief orientation (less than one hour), led by NYSCAA staff.

The Poverty Simulation is a two to three-hour event.

NYSCAA staff will conduct the entire exercise, guiding the volunteers and participants through a “month” of poverty and leading a debriefing session immediately after.

## Contact

Heidi Barcomb

Program and Communications Director  
New York State Community Action  
Association

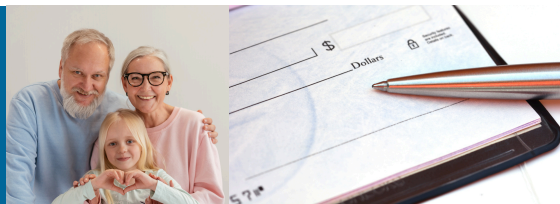
518.690.0491

[hbarcomb@nyscommunityaction.org](mailto:hbarcomb@nyscommunityaction.org)

RETHINK POVERTY.



“I learned about  
the snowball  
effects of poverty.”



I learned that  
“Unexpected expenses,  
even small ones, can  
throw off a monthly  
budget significantly.”

