



## ARIZONA'S VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Highlights of the 104th  
Arizona Town Hall

April 27-30, 2014  
Tucson, Arizona





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**V**ulnerable populations are those at systemic risk of falling into crisis at any moment, often in response to unexpected life events. Some vulnerable populations or individuals live on the border of crisis, one mishap away from disaster. Others exist slightly above the safety net, barely getting by.

- From the 104th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

**F**or over 50 years, Arizona Town Hall has engaged, educated and empowered Arizonans to create solutions to critical policy issues.

A diverse cross-section of Arizona residents from various communities and walks of life, all interested in understanding the issues surrounding Arizona's vulnerable populations and creating solutions designed to build resiliency, met at the 104th Arizona Town Hall for three days of facilitated discussions.

Prior to the Town Hall, participants from throughout the state reviewed a comprehensive background report developed by Arizona State University's Morrison Institute. Meeting in facilitated small groups for two days, the participants addressed a common set of discussion questions. Trained recorders captured points of consensus and the entire group gathered for a plenary session on the third day to adopt a report of findings and recommendations. Although not every Town Hall participant agrees with every conclusion and recommendation, their report reflects the overall consensus achieved by the 104th Arizona Town Hall.

This publication is a summary of the complete report that includes the background research and the report of recommendations. Complete Town Hall reports are published and made available to Arizona Town Hall members, elected officials including the Arizona Legislature, public libraries, and the general public. Download copies online at [www.aztownhall.org](http://www.aztownhall.org), or call 602-252-9600 to request a printed copy.

# Key Points from the Background Report



## Introduction

The background report which was prepared by Arizona State University addressed unseen vulnerability in six critical areas: education, employment, finances, health, family dynamics and access to resources. The report examined both governmental and non-governmental responses and looks beyond service delivery to structural change and public policy options.

## Access to Resources

- Vulnerability goes beyond finances.
- Rural and remote areas lack essential services, including high speed Internet.
- Transportation is key to accessibility issues.
- Lack of a savings account undermines financial stability.
- High interest loan practices remain widespread.
- 30% of Arizona households are considered 'asset poor' (the inability of a household to utilize their savings and assets to weather an unexpected financial crisis for up to three months).

## Educational Opportunities

- Quality early education is key to later success.
- Education is the key to employment opportunity.
- Many veterans face challenges adjusting to civilian life, including navigating educational opportunities after high school.

- The path to education after high school is especially challenging for homeless children and those leaving the foster care system.

## Employment Opportunities

- Under-employment can leave people as vulnerable as unemployment.
- Vulnerability is impacted by where you live, what opportunities you have, and the career choices you make.

## Actions or programs that create stronger more resilient families and neighborhoods

- Resilience to adversity is a key to family health and well being.
- Family stress undermines positive parenting.
- Early intervention and the promotion of positive relationships and healthy relationship skills are keys to building family resilience.

## Access to health care, including behavior/mental health care

- Access to affordable, quality health care is a significant challenge for Arizona's vulnerable populations.
- The Arizona Department of Health Services identified insurance coverage for behavioral health care and access to behavioral health care to be the top health priority facing the people of Arizona at this time.
- Mental illness and substance abuse are among the most devastating health conditions that vulnerable populations are at risk of experiencing.

"As more tasks move online, it hollows out the offline options. A lot of employers don't accept offline job applications. It means if you don't have the Internet, you could be really isolated."

*Edward Wyatt, New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/19/technology/a-push-to-connect-millions-who-live-offline-to-the-internet.html>*



"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."

*Jane Howard, author*

For specific resources, links and videos, visit the website created by ASU especially for this Town Hall:

<http://www.azvp.org>



Participants have the opportunity to talk with others from around the state and make lasting connections during the intense three day panel discussions.

Arizona's economy is too organized around home building and tourism and, therefore, is susceptible to boom and bust cycles. These general economic conditions make it more difficult for individuals to move out of a vulnerable population into a more secure situation.

- From the 104th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

# Report of Recommendations

The 104th Arizona Town Hall gathered in Tucson on April 27-30, 2014, to consider how best to address the needs of vulnerable individuals and populations and prevent them from falling into crisis, with the attendant social costs impacting communities and the State as a whole.

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH ACTIONS

- Create an Arizona Council on Family and Individual Resilience to be responsible for spreading the word about how vulnerable populations can find help and for devising and implementing measures to keep vulnerable populations from falling into crisis.
- Develop and adopt a financial literacy curriculum to be taught in schools statewide.
- Collaborate with financial institutions to develop a campaign to have families open a savings account for every child.
- Develop an action plan for youth aging out of the foster care system.
- Explore upstream investment (i.e. prevention-focused) as a means for governments and nonprofit organizations to collaborate on shared goals.
- Carve out a part of the existing funding from the Arizona Job Training Program for employer-based employee retention and higher education tuition reimbursement programs.

## LEGISLATIVE CHANGES THAT REQUIRE LITTLE OR NO ADDITIONAL FUNDING

- Outlaw predatory lending practices.
- Refer a ballot measure to the voters repealing Proposition 300, which would allow undocumented members of vulnerable populations to utilize empowerment programs and allow access to in-state tuition for children brought to the United States before the age of 16.

- Increase the minimum wage to \$10.50 per hour to be increased annually as provided by the Arizona Minimum Wage Act.
- Review mandatory sentencing guidelines with the aim to decrease prison populations.
- Enable pay-for-success bonds to deliver grants to non-governmental entities.

## LEGISLATIVE CHANGES THAT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FUNDING

- Provide a dedicated funding stream for Arizona 2-1-1, a private nonprofit community information and referral service dedicated to connecting Arizonans with available health and human services in their communities.
- Reinstate childcare subsidies and make full-time students eligible for them.
- Restore funding for the Housing Trust Fund and make it an unsweepable fund.
- Increase the Arizona Working Poor Tax Credit to encourage donations to charities that help members of vulnerable populations.
- Restore all-day Kindergarten and provide funding for pre-K services starting at age 4 in Title I public schools.
- Fund specialty court programs including those for mental health, veterans, the homeless and drug rehabilitation.
- Require county and local law enforcement to demonstrate competency in engaging vulnerable populations, and mandate that law enforcement engage in community outreach and education, including community forums.



Participants of Panel Hedgehog, facilitated by Panel Chair Hank Peck, go over proposed amendments to the draft recommendations during Wednesday's plenary session.

**M**any members of vulnerable populations add to the richness and diversity of our perspective, and bring wisdom in helping the broader community to understand resiliency and resourcefulness and how to achieve them.

- From the 104th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

- Explore joint use agreements to keep school playgrounds open on evenings and weekends.
- Promote and invest matching funds in Individual Development Accounts as a way to promote savings and teach financial literacy; and engage local school districts to incorporate IDA education into curriculum.
- Subsidize public transportation, especially in rural communities.
- Encourage the League of Cities and Towns and all councils of government to promote best practices for municipal programs focusing on vulnerable populations.

## ACTIONS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGO's)

- The Arizona Center for After School Excellence and United Way are encouraged to work with providers and stakeholders statewide to build support for continuous improvement for out of school programming for youth through adoption of best practices in quality.
- Establish, continue and enhance inter-faith councils.
- Charities and advocacy organizations should use this Town Hall report to campaign for changes to help vulnerable populations.
- Non-governmental organizations and government agencies can partner to expand or establish one-stop shops for multiple direct services, intake, and enrollment assistance in public and nonprofit programs.

## ACTIONS BY INDIVIDUALS

- Become educated about who are the vulnerable populations in our communities, and what they need from us.

- Ask elected leaders and candidates to join this conversation and take actions.
- Take ownership of the findings from this Town Hall and become ambassadors for vulnerable populations that live and work near us.
- Encourage civic responsibility and a political engagement campaign among service agencies to allow those receiving services to effect change and continue the process.

## ACTIONS BY BUSINESSES AND OTHERS

- The legal profession should strive to provide adequate, affordable civil legal services for low-income individuals.
- Encourage and incentivize employees to volunteer in their communities.
- Prioritize childcare, transportation, and education subsidies/vouchers for employees.
- Pay employees a living wage.

## COOPERATIVE ACTIONS

- Provide collective service partnerships where multiple resources are provided under one roof.
- Leverage and expand anchor services that already exist, such as Project Connect by Pima County in partnership with United Way.
- Support literacy programs.
- Engage the statewide Workforce Investment Board system to disseminate information to their stakeholders.

Keynote speakers at this Town Hall were:

**Ida Rademacher**, Vice President for Programs, Corporation for Enterprise Development; and

**Erin Currier**, Director of the Economic Mobility Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts.



Participants of the Future Leaders Town Hall held in Paradise Valley.

It is important that we address the needs of the vulnerable populations because we want to prevent them from falling into poverty completely.

- From Mesa High School student discussions using the Arizona Town Hall process.

# Future Leaders Town Hall on Vulnerable Populations

On April 16, 2014, the Arizona Town Hall, in partnership with Maricopa Community Colleges and other organizations, held a Future Leaders Town Hall on Vulnerable Populations that drew high school and college students from around the state. Following are some of the key points developed from the gathering.

## IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERATION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Recognize that vulnerable populations are contributing members of our community.
- Members of vulnerable populations have great insight into ways to improve the community.
- The potential exists to end the cycle of vulnerability, solve problems, and improve the community overall.
- Reducing vulnerability improves the economy.

## SUPPORTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TO IMPROVE RESILIENCY

- Address systemic barriers to access to financial resources and the constraints of financial institution lending practices.
- Educational opportunities are the key to reducing vulnerability and improving the quality of life.
- Improvements in support services such as public transportation, day care, health care, and job training will enable vulnerable populations to participate in the mainstream economy.
- Programs that strengthen individuals, families and neighborhoods will promote resiliency.

## MESSAGES TO ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- Provide greater support for public education and access to informational resources including job training, workshops and computer access
- Improve public transportation to increase mobility of vulnerable populations.
- Offer incentives to businesses to train workers and employ new graduates.
- Embed themselves in the situation of vulnerable populations such as undocumented immigrants, debt-laden students and hungry children to understand and address their needs.

## CALL TO ACTION

- Work together as communities to support vulnerable populations.
- Help someone with no savings or no insurance or no Internet to find the resources they need.
- Participate in programs that teach personal savings, job skills and accessing information/support services.
- Support fellow students who are often part of vulnerable populations.



Media were present during the intense 3-day discussions taking place at the Town Hall.

There are some who rely on way too much debt to get through school. We're hearing that many many students are borrowing heavily to get through school and then they move into vocations where they have no realistic prospect of being able to repay the debt. So the seeds of future vulnerability are being planted, you might say, at a very young age.

- Quote from Arizona Town Hall Board of Directors Executive Committee Member Richard Morrison during Tucson Channel 11 television news program.

## Vulnerable Populations Quick Links

- <http://azafterschool.org/promoting-quality/> Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence has new Arizona Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs. Learn how quality out-of-school time programs can provide the social and emotional foundation youth need for academic success at the same time they help close the achievement gap.
- <http://www.azvp.org> This is the interactive link created by ASU to view or download the Vulnerable Populations background report. It includes many resource links and videos.
- <http://www.211arizona.org> This is the link to Arizona 2-1-1, a community information and referral service whose mission it is to connect Arizonans with available health and human services in their communities.
- <http://www.azceh.org> Learn more about the issue of homelessness, and find opportunities to help at The Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness website. This organization seeks the end of homelessness in Arizona, through advocacy, education and coordination with local communities.

## How You Can Have An Impact

- Share your knowledge and the work of Town Hall participants with family, friends and coworkers.
- Keep up to date on relevant programs in your community and action you can take through the Arizona Town Hall (<http://www.aztownhall.org>).
- Arrange a program in your community. Arizona Town Hall can provide resources, speakers, and printed materials. Use social media and personal networks to share information.
- To join existing efforts to pursue recommendations from the 104th Arizona Town Hall, contact the Arizona Town Hall office.
- Be the change. Model the behavior you expect from others.



We welcome your involvement,  
questions, and perspectives.

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