



THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD FOR COLORADO 2011

Mesa County families need income more than two times the federal poverty level to make ends meet

The income families need to pay basic expenses in Mesa County, such as housing, child care and food, is much higher than the government’s official federal poverty level. A Mesa County family with one adult and one preschooler, for example, needs annual income of \$34,394 to make ends meet, more than two times the federal benchmark.

Closing the wage gap between current wages and the Self-Sufficiency Standard requires both reducing costs and raising incomes. Most individuals cannot achieve self-sufficiency through stopgap measures or in a single step, but require transitional work supports, the removal of barriers and guidance to help meet monthly expenses as families work toward self-sufficiency over time. Key to raising incomes is access to education, training, and jobs that provide real potential for skill and career advancement over the long term. Public policies that value the goal of making work pay are necessary to ensure access to jobs with self-sufficient wages.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011 defines the income realistically needed to support a family, without public or private assistance. The full 2011 report is online at <http://bit.ly/coss2011>.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Mesa County, CO 2011

MONTHLY COSTS	Adult	Adult + Preschooler	Adult + Infant Preschooler	Adult + Preschooler School-age	Adult + School-age Teenager	Adult + Infant + Preschooler + School-age	2 Adults + Infant + Preschooler	2 Adults + Preschooler School-age
Housing	\$596	\$715	\$715	\$715	\$715	\$1,041	\$715	\$715
Child Care	\$0	\$608	\$1,259	\$1,024	\$416	\$1,675	\$1,259	\$1,024
Food	\$230	\$348	\$457	\$522	\$605	\$616	\$655	\$718
Transportation	\$239	\$246	\$246	\$246	\$246	\$246	\$468	\$468
Health Care	\$156	\$410	\$421	\$432	\$460	\$443	\$478	\$489
Miscellaneous	\$122	\$233	\$310	\$294	\$244	\$402	\$358	\$341
Taxes	\$260	\$474	\$685	\$624	\$382	\$962	\$727	\$665
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	\$0	(\$22)	\$0	\$0	(\$154)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	\$0	(\$63)	(\$100)	(\$100)	(\$65)	(\$100)	(\$100)	(\$100)
Child Tax Credit (-)	\$0	(\$83)	(\$167)	(\$167)	(\$167)	(\$250)	(\$167)	(\$167)
SELF-SUFFICIENCY WAGE								
HOURLY	\$9.10	\$16.28	\$21.74	\$20.40	\$15.24	\$28.60	\$12.48 per adult	\$11.80 per adult
MONTHLY	\$1,602	\$2,866	\$3,827	\$3,590	\$2,683	\$5,034	\$4,394	\$4,153
ANNUAL	\$19,221	\$34,394	\$45,921	\$43,084	\$32,196	\$60,412	\$52,731	\$49,839

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2011 shows six of Colorado's 10 most common occupations pay wages that are inadequate for families to reach self-sufficiency. The ratio is higher in some counties and lower in others. Most job losses of the Great Recession were in higher-wage industries, yet as the economy recovers the most job gains have been in lower-wage industries.

The following table, adapted from Table 4 on page 18 of the Self-Sufficiency Standard report, demonstrates how the wages of the most common Colorado occupations can contribute to overall family economic insecurity.

The Self-Sufficiency Wage Gap for Key Professions in Mesa County

OCCUPATION TITLES	Number of employees statewide	Hourly median wage	Annual median wage*	Percent of Self-Sufficiency Standard**
ALL OCCUPATIONS	2,157,690	\$18.19	\$37,836	88%
Retail salespersons	73,190	\$11.23	\$23,358	54%
Secretaries, administrative assistants, except medical, legal and executive	54,600	\$16.20	\$33,700	78%
Cashiers	44,450	\$9.45	\$19,644	46%
Registered nurses	41,960	\$32.73	\$68,089	158%
Waiters and waitresses	41,920	\$8.93	\$18,573	43%
Customer service representatives	40,590	\$15.50	\$32,238	75%
General and operations managers	39,790	\$47.16	\$98,084	228%
Business operations specialists all other	36,530	\$31.38	\$65,269	151%
Janitors and cleaners except maids and housekeeping cleaners	34,560	\$10.75	\$22,370	52%
Sales representatives wholesale and manufacturing except technical and scientific products	31,980	\$26.05	\$54,197	126%
**Self-Sufficiency Standard for one adult, one preschooler and one school-age child in Mesa County.			\$43,084	100%

* Wages adjusted for inflation using the West region Consumer Price Index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Source: US department of Labor, "May 2010 State occupational employment and Wage estimates," databases and tables, occupational employment Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/data.htm> (accessed June 2, 2011).

Advocates can engage with a network of people and organizations working to reduce poverty across Colorado by visiting the blog of the Colorado General Assembly's Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force, online at www.2019colorado.org.

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