



What is "Walk A Mile?"

Walk a Mile is a unique education program conducted by the Northwest Institute for Children & Families and the University of Washington School of Social Work that brings policymakers and recipients of public assistance together to learn more about each other's lives, gain new perspectives, and to "walk a mile" in each other shoes. *Walk a Mile* works by pairing policymakers with one of their constituents receiving some form of public assistance. Over a period of one month, Walk-a-Mile partners share life experiences through:

- ❖ Weekly telephone calls.
- ❖ One activity from the recipient's life, such as a trip to the state welfare office, grocery shopping, or a training program.
- ❖ One activity from the policymaker's life, such as attending a hearing, press conference, or other meeting.
- ❖ Food budget comparisons: policymakers are asked to try feeding their family on a food stamp budget during the program.

At the end of the month, all participants are invited to an open-mike reception to share their experiences with the public and one another.

What is the purpose of "Walk a Mile"?

The program is intended to foster participatory democracy by including those who are often left out or forgotten in public discourse. *Walk a Mile* is not designed to produce a particular outcome, but to give the individuals who participate the opportunity to learn something, through experience, that they may not have previously known about policy makers, policies or the individuals affected by those policies. The outcomes of this open dialogue between two individuals who are committed to learning from one another are often surprising and far-reaching.

When is Walk a Mile coming to Oklahoma?

Walk a Mile will run in August 2005. Before then, however, there is much work to be done, as the goal is to match every legislator with a constituent. *Endorsers* will be recruited throughout January and February. *Liaisons* will be recruited in March and April, and trained in May. *Legislators* and *Constituents* will be recruited in May and June. Confirmation letters will go out in July. The open-mike reception will be held in September.

How can I participate in Oklahoma's "Walk a Mile" Program?

This year, *CAP* and the *Oklahoma Self-Sufficiency Coalition* will coordinate *Walk A Mile* in Oklahoma. We will be looking for organizations – generally statewide, but possibly a few local – to lend their names to the project as *Endorsers*. We will be looking for *financial donations*. We will need *Liaisons* to identify low-income individuals throughout the state to match with policymakers and to support the matches throughout the project. We will need assistance with the *Liaison training sessions* and the *Reception*. If you or your organization is interested in getting involved in *any* way, please contact:

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