Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law





2021 Annual Report



Dear Friends of the Shriver Center,

2021 was a year of extraordinary challenge and continued uncertainty for low-income people and their communities. The economic and human effects of the COVID-19 pandemic remained severe, blurring the line between the middle class and people in poverty. Many families faced unstable housing, food insecurity, job loss, health concerns, and the ongoing strain of trying to recover from a crisis that exposed and deepened long-standing inequities. As a result, the need for the programs and policies advocated by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law remained as urgent as ever.

At the same time, 2021 was a year of significant political transition and renewed possibility. Nationally, a new administration took office amid increased attention to racial justice, economic inequality, health care, and access to opportunity. In Illinois and across the country, policymakers, advocates, and communities were called upon to respond not only to immediate crisis, but also to the deeper structural problems the pandemic had laid bare. These developments created both new opportunities and new responsibilities for organizations committed to fighting poverty and advancing justice.

Despite the challenges that shaped the public policy landscape in 2021, this report highlights the progress we were able to make across a wide range of issues, from housing and health care to child care, public benefits, and economic justice. We continued to produce high-quality analysis and advocacy focused on reducing poverty and advancing racial and economic equity. Our work remained grounded in the experiences of people and communities directly affected by hardship. We addressed urgent problems with practical, compassionate, and systemic solutions. By building and sustaining relationships among advocates, community

organizations, practitioners, policymakers, and grassroots leaders, we continued to advance meaningful change even in a difficult and uncertain time.

We remain committed to the long term. We know that setbacks can sharpen resolve, and that progress is often built step by step through persistence, partnership, and vision. The work of building a more just society does not happen all at once, but each gain creates the foundation for the next.

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2021, and we believe you will be proud as you read about them as well. To those of you who supported us, thank you for your partnership and for the vital role you play in this work. With your continued support, and with the help of many new allies, we look forward to building on this progress in the years ahead.

Janice E. Rodgers

Janice E. Rodgers

Chair of the Board of Directors



Poverty isn't a simple problem. Ending it isn't simple either.

In 2021, continued economic instability and the lasting effects of the pandemic brought renewed attention to issues the Shriver Center has been addressing for more than four decades. As families across the country faced growing hardship, the need for effective advocacy on behalf of low-income individuals and communities became even more urgent. The Shriver Center met this challenge through a range of successful initiatives focused on health care, job training, safe and affordable housing, welfare, and other essential issues affecting daily life and long-term stability.

With its distinctive and proven approach, blending grassroots advocacy with innovative legal theory, the Shriver Center continued to advance economic and social justice in meaningful and practical ways at the national, state, and local levels. Our work is grounded in the belief that lasting change requires both strong legal strategies and close connection to the realities communities face on the ground. We are a creative, dedicated team of experienced attorneys, advocates, and staff members committed to using the law as a tool to expand opportunity, protect dignity, and help move people out of poverty toward the life every person deserves.

At a particularly critical time, supporters and donors stood with us in the ongoing fight against poverty, strengthening our ability to respond with urgency, determination, and purpose. Their partnership made it possible for the Shriver Center to lead with vision and persistence in promoting health, safety, fairness, and the opportunity to prosper. In a year marked by uncertainty, that support helped sustain the work of building a more just and equitable future.



Housing

The Shriver Center brokered an agreement to settle a 2007 lawsuit against the Rockford Housing Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. With HUD approval, the housing authority intended to demolish an 84-unit public housing development without replacing any of the units. The settlement requires the housing authority to develop 77 units of new low-income housing and to implement a housing mobility program that would allow residents to move to low-poverty, integrated communities. Thus HUD was prompted to change its policy on demolishing public housing.

The Center continued to fight to save Evergreen Terrace, a 356-unit project-based Section 8 development in Joliet, Illinois. The City of Joliet was attempting to eliminate the riverfront homes through eminent domain. The tenants, represented by the Shriver Center, fought in court for their homes and joined the development's owners and HUD in opposing the condemnation in federal court. They argued before the Seventh Circuit that Joliet's taking was contrary to federal law.

In October, an amendment to the Safe Homes Act, supported by the Shriver Center, became law. The amendment prohibits landlords from informing other landlords when tenants have broken their leases because of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual violence.

The Shriver Center's ongoing monitoring of the Chicago Housing Authority's plans for the publicly subsidized Henry Horner Homes helped bring national attention to the preservation of public housing. The Center also supported the MacArthur Foundation's Preservation Compact, a collaborative initiative dedicated to protecting affordable rental housing in Cook County. This effort has since gained national recognition as a model for other communities.





Children and Youth

Illinois child care providers participating in the Child Care Assistance Program once again received increased state funding as a result of the Shriver Center's strong and sustained advocacy. The Center also continued its efforts to expand a program that provides higher reimbursement rates to providers who meet stronger quality standards, helping to improve both access and outcomes for working families. These advances reinforced the importance of investing in child care not only as a support for parents, but also as a foundation for healthy childhood development. They also reflected a broader commitment to strengthening the systems families rely on every day.

In February, the Illinois Department of Human Services released Making Quality Child Care Affordable for Illinois's Working Families, a report drafted by the Shriver Center. The report serves as a practical blueprint for Illinois and other states seeking to expand access to safe, affordable, and high-quality child care for low-income working families. By combining policy analysis with real-world solutions, it provided a meaningful framework for reform at a time of growing need.

The Shriver Center also continued its advocacy on behalf of young women in school through the Ensuring Success in School Task Force. This initiative focuses on the needs of female students facing domestic or sexual violence, pregnancy, and parenting, recognizing the barriers these young women often encounter in completing their education. Through this work, the Center helped bring greater visibility to the connection between educational opportunity, personal safety, and long-term economic stability.

The Shriver Center worked with the Illinois State Board of Education, teachers' unions, school districts, youth service providers, and organizations addressing domestic and sexual violence. Together, they helped establish the Ensuring Success in School Task Force's priorities and agenda. The Center will also prepare a report for the Illinois legislature and continues to advise advocates in other states on the Ensuring Success in School model policy, helping extend support for vulnerable students nationwide.

Workforce and Economic Development

The Shriver Center continued to advocate for the integration of workforce and economic development in policy and practice. As families faced unemployment and economic instability, the Center promoted strategies connecting job creation with meaningful opportunities. Its approach emphasized that economic growth must benefit workers, particularly those facing barriers to employment. By advancing policies that address the needs of working communities, the Shriver Center continued to promote a more inclusive and equitable economy.

As a leader of the Illinois Works for the Future campaign, the Shriver Center encouraged dialogue among business leaders, labor unions, government representatives, and policy experts. The campaign fostered collaboration on job training, economic mobility, and workforce development. By bringing together different sectors, it promoted coordinated strategies to prepare workers for changing economic conditions and create pathways toward stable employment and long-term advancement.

The Shriver Center also advocated for a national transitional jobs program to help unemployed individuals develop the skills and experience needed for stable employment. These programs offer immediate work opportunities, practical training, and support services that help individuals transition into permanent jobs. This advocacy reflects the Center's commitment to addressing the underlying causes of poverty and unemployment through comprehensive, lasting solutions. The Shriver Center emphasized the importance of dignity, readiness, and the belief that people can succeed when given meaningful support and a real chance.



Public Benefits

More than 27,000 Illinois families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) saw their monthly cash grants increase by 9 percent following two years of advocacy by the Shriver Center. For a family of three in Chicago, the monthly grant rose from $396 to $434. This 2021 increase was only the third since 1994 and the largest ever, marking an important victory after years of stagnant benefit levels.

For families facing financial hardship, increased assistance helps cover essential needs such as food, transportation, and school supplies. The Shriver Center's advocacy emphasized the importance of a stronger social safety net that respects families' dignity and responds to rising living costs. Although the increase did not fully address the long-standing gap between public benefits and actual living expenses, it represented meaningful progress toward greater financial stability.

This achievement reflects the Shriver Center's commitment to combining policy expertise, coalition-building, and sustained advocacy to improve the lives of low-income families. The TANF increase demonstrated how persistent efforts can produce tangible results and advance policies that promote economic security and fairness.



Public Benefits

The Shriver Center continued to serve as co-chair of the Illinois Asset Building Group, one of the nation's leading state coalitions focused on asset-building policy. Through this work, the Center helped advance strategies that enable low-income individuals and families not only to meet immediate needs, but also to build long-term financial stability. The coalition played an important role in supporting the legislation that created the Children's Savings Account Task Force, which was charged with studying the development of a statewide children's savings account program. In addition, the group continued its efforts to protect consumers and promote a broad understanding of assets, including financial resources, educational opportunity, and access to training that can strengthen long-term economic security.



This work reflects a broader understanding that economic well-being is not measured solely by income, but also by the ability to save, plan, and invest in the future. Families are better positioned to withstand hardship and pursue opportunity when they have access to tools that help them build assets over time. By supporting policies that expand these opportunities, the Shriver Center continued to advocate for a more inclusive economy in which low-income households can move beyond crisis management and begin building a foundation for lasting stability.

Beyond immediate financial assistance, the Shriver Center continued to advocate for policies that help families build long-term economic security. By promoting access to savings, education, and financial resources, the Center worked to create opportunities for low-income households to achieve greater independence and stability.



Health Care

In April, a court ruling threatened Illinois's FamilyCare coverage for thousands of families and placed the health insurance of another 500,000 families at risk. In response, the Shriver Center moved quickly to protect affected households. In May, the Center intervened in the case and secured a stay from the Illinois Supreme Court, ensuring that families would not lose coverage while the case continued. This action provided critical short-term protection and prevented immediate disruption in access to care for parents and children across the state.

At the same time, the Shriver Center developed a legislative fallback strategy to protect families regardless of the court's final decision. The Center drafted language to clarify Illinois Medicaid law and worked closely with state lawmakers to build support for a solution that would preserve coverage. Through legal advocacy, policy drafting, and direct education of policymakers, the Center helped ensure that the needs of vulnerable families remained at the center of the response.

This work reflected the Shriver Center's ability to act effectively on multiple fronts at once. By combining litigation strategy with legislative advocacy, the Center strengthened its ability to protect families facing urgent threats. It also demonstrated the importance of being prepared not only to respond to a legal setback, but to build a practical path forward.

Maintaining health coverage is essential to family stability, especially for households already facing financial strain. Losing insurance can mean delayed treatment, unmet medical needs, and greater hardship for both parents and children. The Shriver Center's intervention helped prevent that kind of disruption at a critical moment.

The Shriver Center also partnered with the State of Iowa to help legislators craft an affordable and comprehensive health care program for all of Iowa's children, regardless of income level. This work extended the Center's impact beyond Illinois and reflected its broader commitment to expanding access to care through thoughtful, inclusive public policy. By sharing its expertise with leaders in other states, the Center continued to advance practical health care solutions for children and families nationwide.

Impact

The Shriver Center's interactive 2021 Poverty Scorecard evaluated members of Congress based on their votes on major poverty-related legislation. Each senator and representative received a grade from A+ to F, allowing users to examine individual voting records, state delegations, or Congress as a whole. The Scorecard also provided summaries and analysis of key legislation, helping the public understand how congressional decisions affect low-income families.

In its forty-second year of publication, the Shriver Center's Clearinghouse Review: Journal of Poverty Law and Policy remained a leading resource for attorneys serving low-income communities. The journal offered legal strategies, practical guidance, and policy analysis to advocates nationwide, helping them address complex legal challenges and strengthen their representation of vulnerable populations. An attorney from the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands reported that one article helped secure benefits for hundreds of rural clients affected by state clerical errors.

Special issues included Let Elders Age Independently and with Dignity, which provided practical strategies for protecting the rights, independence, and well-being of older adults. Through these publications, the Review continued to support legal professionals working to advance economic and social justice while promoting effective solutions to persistent inequalities.



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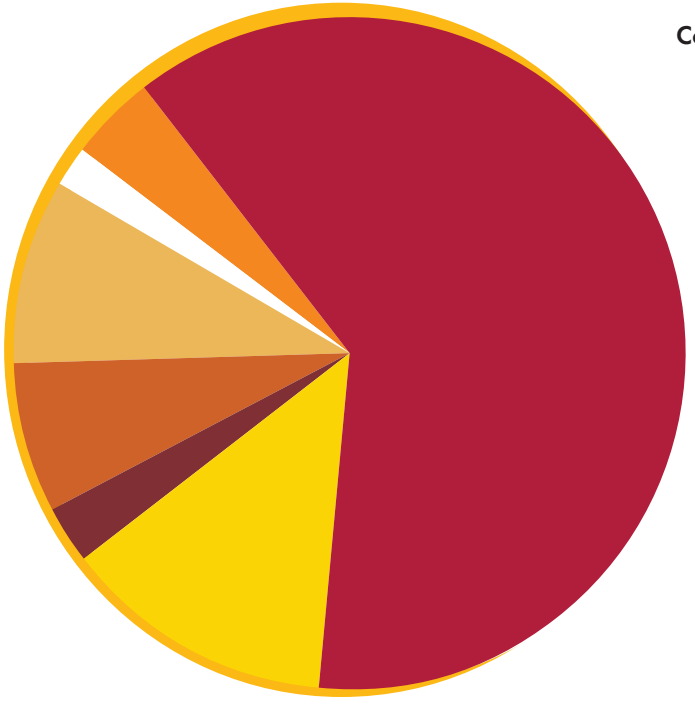
The Shriver Center thanks its generous donors for their continued support and commitment to its mission. Their contributions help advance meaningful change and expand opportunities for families facing poverty. This generosity strengthens the Center's ability to advocate for social and economic justice.

Special thanks go to the Taproot Foundation and the volunteers who contributed to the 2021 Annual Report. Their dedication, creativity, and expertise were essential to bringing this publication to life.

The project team included Kathi Boyd, Project Manager; Simone Esubi, Marketing Manager; Nathalie Gribinski, Graphic Designer; and Allison Rong, Strategy Analyst.

Cristina Rutter served as Photographer, Kara Spak as Copywriter/Editor, and Ruth Young as Account Director.

2021 Shriver Center Total Revenue (in percentages)



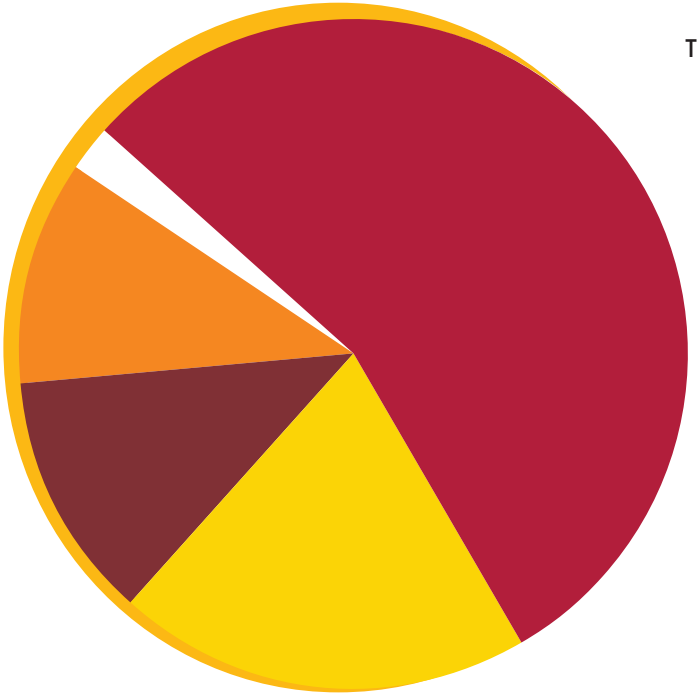
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Contributions, grants, and pledges receivable are reviewed periodically for collectability. Amounts determined to be uncollectible are written off when identified. Based on this assessment, management believes receivables are collectible in all material respects, and no allowance for doubtful accounts has been recorded unless otherwise indicated.

Grants	62%
Individual Donors	13%
Special Events	9%
Subscription Revenue	7%
Other Revenues	4%
Donated Goods and Services	3%
Fellowship Grants	2%

2021 Shriver Center Total Expenses (in percentages)



The advocacy unit works to reduce poverty through policy development and legal advocacy in Illinois and around the United States, promoting economic opportunities and eliminating barriers to economic advancement.

The communication programs unit uses a variety of communication techniques to promote the best and most efficient practices in using law and policy to end poverty.

Management and general expenses provide for resources needed to support the overall operations and management of the Shriver Center, and include costs associated with the Board of Directors, financial management, administrative support, technology support, human resources administration, maintenance of office facilities and procurement and maintenance of office supplies and equipment.

Fundraising provides the structure necessary to encourage and secure private financial support from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

Advocacy	55%
Communications	20%
Fundraising	12%
Management and General	11%
Cost of Direct Benefits to Donors	2%

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