

10th Annual Maine Advocacy Conference



Tuesday, November 3, 2015
Presented by
Maine Equal Justice

Join Us to Envision a Future That Creates Bridges to Opportunity

Please join us Tuesday, November 3rd for a day of learning, networking and collective visioning:

- What are the recent changes to Maine's services and supports for families and individuals with low incomes?
- How can we be more effective advocates for the families with whom we work, our neighbors and ourselves?
- How can we change the conversation about welfare in Maine and support policies that create economic opportunities that help people get ahead and leave poverty behind?



When: 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Where: Augusta Civic Center

Registration Fee: \$50 **

*** (Contact us about a low-income waiver)*

Register Now!

Why you should attend:

Together we can change the conversation from one that blames people with low incomes for their circumstances to a constructive, solution-focused conversation about poverty.

Across the state, people are struggling to meet their basic needs – to put food on the table, to find an affordable place to live or a good paying job, or to afford a visit to the doctor. In recent years, more than 28,000 Maine people lost food assistance, 70,000 were denied MaineCare coverage, and over 15,000 children lost help when they were dropped from the TANF program. As supports have been dismantled, hardships have increased. This has happened in the context of an economy that is failing to produce enough jobs that pay decent wages.

We know it doesn't have to be this way. Instead of punishing individuals for being poor and for circumstances beyond their control, we could be building pathways to opportunity.

Agenda

8:00-8:45	Registration/Networking
8:45-10:00	Welcome/Plenary
10:15-12:00	Workshops
12:00-12:45	*Lunch/Networking
12:45-2:00	Lunchtime Key Note Speaker
2:15-4:00	Workshops

Drop off evaluations and collect CEUs!

***Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided**

***7 hours of Social Worker Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) will be awarded**

*** Waiver available to those who can't afford conference fee**

If you have questions or need special accommodations, please contact Crystal Bond by phone at 626-7058, ext. 205 or by email at: cbond@mejp.org

The advocacy conference is for everyone! Agencies are encouraged to send both staff and people with low incomes who are active in your organization.

Opening Plenary

Walking the Path toward Real Reform

Welfare reform has gotten a lot of attention in recent years. While most agree that reform is needed, people define reform differently. It is important that reform efforts improve the lives of people who are struggling to get by.

Chris Hastedt, co-founder of Maine Equal Justice Partners, will moderate a panel of people who have experienced the struggles on a daily basis. These experts know firsthand what would make a difference in creating opportunities for themselves and their families. Panelists will discuss how they have been impacted by so-called reform measures and what kinds of changes could instead be implemented that would allow them to improve their circumstances and leave poverty behind.

Lunchtime Keynote Speaker

Linda Stout

Linda Stout is an activist and a visionary. In her lifetime, she has identified and worked against injustice within her world, her country and her community. Like so many women – **a handful recognized, most invisible** – she has refused to be silenced or stopped from building inclusive, direct democracy. She is a powerful speaker and storyteller. By speaking from the heart, she draws on her own life experiences and 30 years of social activist work. She empowers, entertains and inspires her audience through her unique and transformative story telling.



Our conference workshops aim to encourage thought and discussion on the broader social and economic justice context of each topic area and provide information and resources to help you navigate the system more effectively. We will also provide updates on any relevant legislative changes pertaining to the workshop topic.

Morning Workshops

Food Supplement Benefits:

An overview of the program; tips to increase or expedite benefits; waiver of overpayments; and recent rule changes will be discussed.

Access to Maine's Safety Net for Immigrants:

Learn about eligibility for public assistance programs and healthcare assistance based on immigration status, including recent changes to eligibility. We will discuss current efforts to increase access to Maine's safety net for Maine's recent immigrants.

Housing and General Assistance:

Learn about tenants' rights and responsibilities; the eviction process; warranty of habitability; and fair housing issues. We'll also get an overview of housing programs and resources to prevent homelessness such as General Assistance, Emergency Assistance, and Alternative Aid; and resources to prevent foreclosure.

MaineCare:

An overview of MaineCare eligibility and services, how the application and review process works and ways to assist people navigating the MaineCare process.

TANF/ASPIRE:

An overview of programs; who's required to participate in ASPIRE; TANF time limits, extensions and exemptions; new program changes; fair hearings and resources for representation.

Afternoon Workshops

Walking the Path to Real Reform TOGETHER:

- Do you want to change the conversation in our state about poverty and economic justice?
- Do you want to do more than help one family at a time?
- Do you want to stand with your family, friends and neighbors for REAL welfare reform that builds opportunity and an economy that works for everyone but don't know where to start?

If so, then this workshop is for you. Learn about how Maine and states around the country have been battling myths about poverty. Learn about what we can do together to stop the relentless assault on poor people. Join us to help create a vision for a statewide organizing effort to turn this around. Let's walk the path to REAL reform side by side!

Transitioning from Public Assistance into the Workforce:

It is not always easy to transition back into the workforce, especially when you are going to work in a job that pays very little. Learn about supports and resources that can make this transition easier, as well as recent legislative changes in this area.

Tax Credits for Individuals and Families with Low Incomes:

A number of refundable tax credits are available to low income families and individuals. Many people do not know about these supports, which for some families could represent as much as an additional \$1,500 in annual income. Learn more about these credits and how people can benefit from them.

Health Care Options for the Uninsured:

Learn more about how to assist people without insurance through such options as: free care, Care Partners, free and reduced care clinics, prescription drug programs, insurance options through the Marketplace and how to make best use of insurance coverage. You will also build on your health insurance literacy.

Deadline for Registration: Friday, October 23rd

Workshop capacity is limited and will be filled on a first come first serve basis. If you are intent on a particular workshop, **please register early**. If your choice is already full, we will contact you by phone or email and let you know what is available. Please be sure to give us your full contact information. Feel free to fax registrations with a purchase order or note indicating payment will follow.

Please note that the registration cost is \$50 in the hope that organizations will send multiple staff members.

If you would like to attend but are unable to afford the registration fee, please contact us about a waiver of the fee at cbond@mejp.org.

ATTENTION: We will include a list of names and contact information for all registrants in each conference packet. If you wish to be omitted from the list, please be sure to check the box on The Registration Form.

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