

Hygiene Poverty Toolkit



Creating Partnerships to Change Lives



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Introduction

Hello!

We are Donations for Dignity, a Colorado-based community initiative that imagines and implements systemic and sustainable ways to address hygiene poverty in our communities. Together, with our partners, Donations for Dignity delivers hygiene products to address the immediate needs of our neighbors and to create structures that ensure reliable access to essentials. We provide period products, diapers, and hygiene products where the need is greatest and access is crucial.

There is not a “one size fits all” solution to hygiene poverty. That is why we take an individualized approach to working with organizations, policy makers, and school systems to address the hidden crisis of hygiene poverty in our communities. We believe in creating partnerships to change lives.

This toolkit seeks to raise awareness about the presence of hygiene poverty in Colorado and offers practical ways to create access to essential hygiene goods. Because it’s more than just a diaper, a wipe, or a pad. It is about ensuring that everyone has dignified access to the hygiene products that they need to care for their bodies.

Together, we can change lives, and shape the future.

Thank you,



For more information about Donations for Dignity, please visit donationsfordignity.org

A Note from Our Founder

Donations for Dignity was founded to fight a hidden crisis in our communities.

It's the inability to afford or even access everyday hygiene products like diapers, wipes, period products, oral care essentials, soap, shampoo, deodorant, and more. This crisis is hygiene poverty. Federal programs like SNAP and WIC don't cover hygiene products, leaving millions without recourse. Hygiene poverty leads to worsening chronic illnesses, barriers to employment, degraded self-worth, inconsistent school attendance, and health problems. This all perpetuates cycles of poverty, further trapping our neighbors.

We can empower the systemic change necessary to tackle this hidden crisis. We have the tools, creativity, and willpower to make meaningful improvements in our neighbors' lives. Every day that goes by means another baby without diapers, another student without tampons, another family without help.

This doesn't have to be as long as they can count on us. On you.

Together, we create partnerships to change lives.

— diane



Understanding Period Poverty, Diaper Need, and Hygiene Poverty

Hygiene poverty is a hidden reality faced by a myriad of people living in the United States. At this time, hygiene products cannot be purchased by using federally funded food-security promotion programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Food insecurity and hygiene poverty often occur simultaneously for an individual, pointing to a dire need for increased access to hygiene products.

To understand the scope of hygiene poverty in our communities, Donations for Dignity implemented a survey to 1,256 Coloradan women¹ in 2022. We asked respondents about their experiences with period poverty², diaper need³, and general access to basic hygiene products⁴.

From this survey, key findings included:

A donut chart with a teal outer ring and a magenta inner ring. The magenta ring represents 47% of the total, while the teal ring represents the remaining 53%.

- 47% of women reported experiencing period poverty, with 41% of those respondents stating that they wore products for longer than recommended to stretch product use.

A donut chart with a teal outer ring and a magenta inner ring. The magenta ring represents 57% of the total, while the teal ring represents the remaining 43%.

- 57% of those with children in diapers struggled with diaper need, with 53% reporting not having enough diapers.

A donut chart with a teal outer ring and a magenta inner ring. The magenta ring represents 60% of the total, while the teal ring represents the remaining 40%.

- 60% of women with children shared that they have struggled to purchase basic hygiene products in the last 12 months.

To put these findings into perspective, almost half of women did not have adequate access to menstrual products, and of those, a significant amount shared that they had to wear products for longer than recommended to ‘stretch’ the use of the product. 57% of women who had children were not able to access the necessary products to change their babies diapers when needed. Families that face diaper need often need to make the difficult decision of stretching the use of their diapers to increase the life of their supply. Overall, a staggering 60% of women with children shared that they struggled to purchase basic hygiene products at all within the last 12 months.

These data show that women are facing increased barriers to caring for their bodies and families in Colorado.

We are not okay with this.

¹ When asked to self-select gender, all survey respondents included in this study identified as women. Thus, the term used to represent survey respondents is ‘women’. We acknowledge that not all people who experience hygiene poverty, period poverty, and diaper need are women, and that access is crucial for all. However, given the significant amount of respondents that were women, this survey and toolkit focus on the connections between hygiene poverty and Coloradan women.

² Period Poverty: “The limited or inadequate access to menstrual products or menstrual health education as a result of financial constraints or negative socio-cultural stigmas associated with menstruation” (PERIOD et al., 2022).

Period Poverty. (2022). Glossary for the Menstrual Movement. Retrieved from <https://period.org/uploads/Global-Glossary-for-the-Menstrual-Movement-v1.3.pdf>

³ Diaper need: “The lack of a sufficient supply of diapers to keep a baby clean, dry and healthy” (National Diaper Bank Network, 2020).

National Diaper Bank Network. (2020). National Diaper Bank Network Diaper Need Overview. Retrieved from: https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NDBN_DiaperNeed_Overview_February_2020.docx.pdf

⁴ Basic hygiene essentials: Hygiene products that are needed to keep one safe and healthy. Hygiene products may include, but are not limited to; toothbrushes, toothpaste, menstrual products, diapers, wipes, deodorant, antiperspirant, etc

Period Poverty

Period poverty is a considerable barrier for those that menstruate. To safely manage a period, one must have access to clean period products, a sanitary place to consistently change products, and accurate information about how to manage their menstrual cycle. Period poverty is also exacerbated by stigma that surrounds openly discussing both periods and poverty.

Consequences of period poverty can include absenteeism in schools for menstruating students-creating a gender-exacerbated gap in education, preventable urinary and genital diseases as a result of stretching the use of products, and negative impacts on mental health. Thus, it is vital that awareness increases around the prevalence of period poverty, and that individuals and organizations alike take steps towards creating tangible change.

In Colorado, we found that of the 1,256 women that participated in our survey about hygiene poverty:

- 47% reported struggling with period poverty.
- 45% of those who were between the ages of 18-24 and 25-34 experienced period poverty.
- 54% of women making less than \$50,000 reported struggling with period poverty.
- 48% of respondents who also identified as Hispanic or Latino experienced period poverty, and 55% of those who identified as Black or African-American experienced period poverty.
- Over 2 in 5 women, or 42% of respondents, used substitute period products like toilet paper, rags, tissues etc. in the past year.

To turn this knowledge into action, you can:

- Identify and donate to local organizations in your area that provide free menstrual products.
- Advocate for places that you frequent to offer free menstrual products in restrooms.
- “Offering free menstrual products increases school attendance amongst girls by 2.4%” (Advocate At Your School, n.d.)
- Advocate for period products at [your school](#)
- 86% of women have started their period in public without the supplies needed.” (Advocate At Your Workplace, n.d.)
- Advocate for period products at [your workplace](#)
- The Colorado Women’s Foundation [toolkit](#) helps you advocate local elected officials
- See if [your state](#) has passed legislation around addressing periods

45%

Of those who are between the ages of 18-24 and 25-34 struggle with period poverty

54%

Of women making less than \$50,000 a year struggle with period poverty

47%

Struggle with period poverty

48%

Of those who are Hispanic/Latino struggle with period poverty

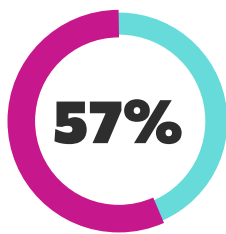
55%

Of those who are Black or African American struggle with period poverty

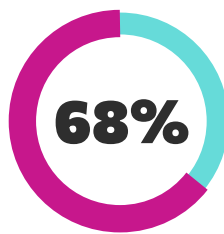
Diaper Need

Diapers are a necessity for infants. Inadequate access to clean diapers has a direct impact on the health and wellness of a child and their caretakers. Babies skin is significantly thinner than that of an adult's skin and more so around a baby's genitals. A baby may urinate as often as every 1-3 hours and some as infrequent as 4-6 times a day, while bowel movements vary widely among babies. It is recommended to change a baby whenever it is soiled or wet. Families that face diaper need often are faced with difficult decision of stretching the use of their diapers to increase the life of their supply. Outcomes of not being able to change a diaper when it is needed included discomfort and potential infections for the baby and increased stress and poor mental health outcomes for the parent(s).

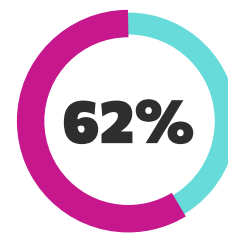
To assess the prevalence of diaper need in Colorado, we found that of the 1,256 women that participated in our survey:



- 57% of those who have children in diapers reported struggling with diaper need.



- 68% of those struggling with diaper need made between \$25,000-\$50,000 annually.



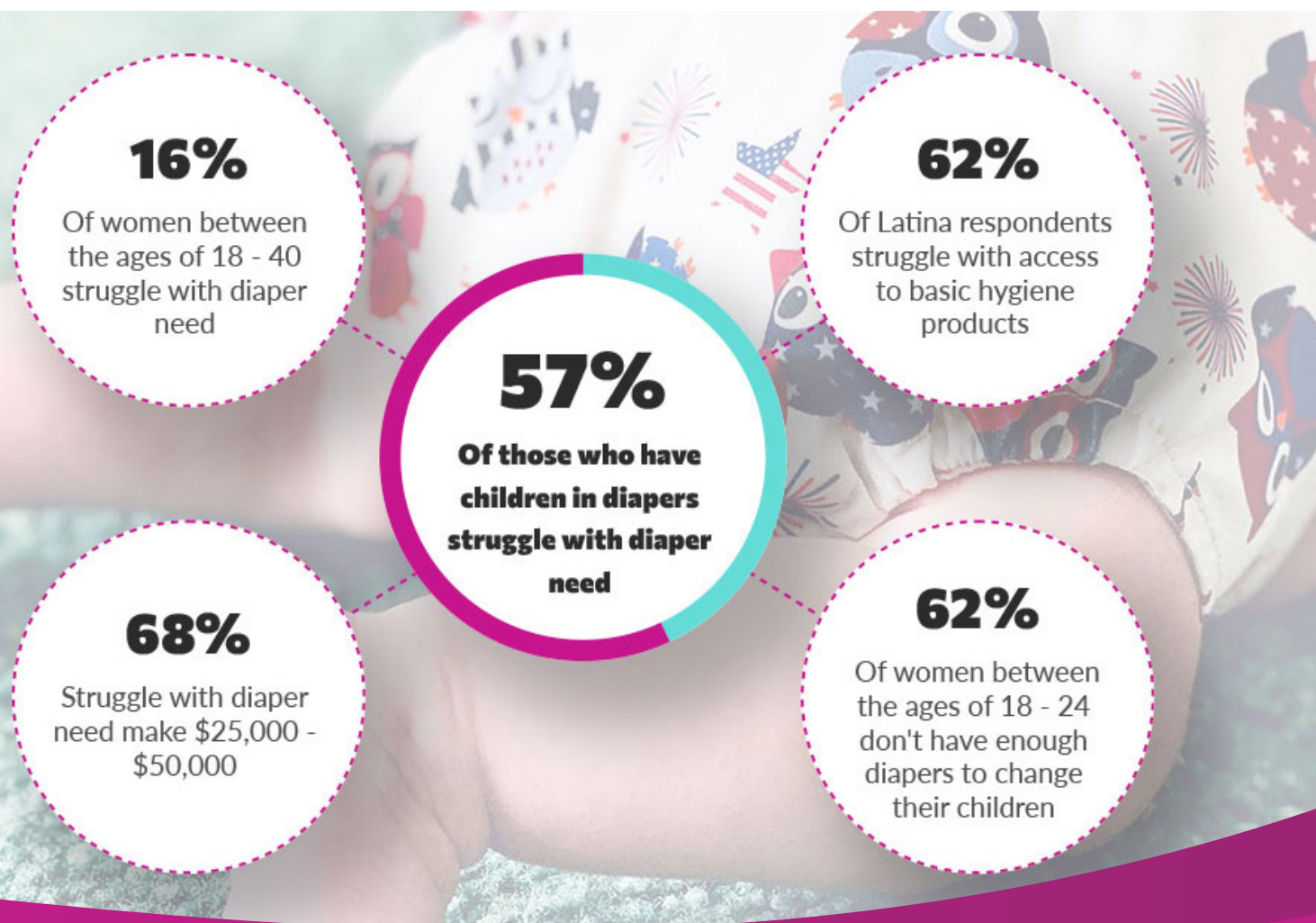
- 62% of women between the ages of 18-24 don't have enough diapers to change their children.

Not being able to purchase diapers through SNAP or WIC was the biggest barrier reported by women who participated in the survey, pointing to a need for increased awareness of local diaper banks and resources.

To support efforts to address diaper need, you can:

- Share your knowledge and educate others about diaper need and prevalence. Identify and donate to local organizations in your area that provide free diapers.
- Contact any of Colorado's diaper banks: Wee Cycle, A Precious Child, Rocky Mountain Diaper Depot, Bottom Line Diaper Bank of Catholic Charities, United Way of Weld County, and The Nappie Project, to see how to get involved.
- Organize a diaper drive & give to a local organization.
- Donate diapers and wipes or donate money to help your local diaper bank, food bank and/or food pantry.
- Volunteer at a diaper bank.
- View the National Diaper Bank's Toolkit for hosting a diaper drive here: <https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/host-a-diaper-drive/>

⁵ Smith, M. V., Kruse, A., Weir, A., & Goldblum, J. (2013). Diaper need and its impact on child health. *Pediatrics*, 132(2), 253–259. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-0597>



Hygiene Poverty

Period poverty and diaper need often occur simultaneously with experiences of hygiene poverty. Hygiene poverty is defined as struggling to access basic hygiene products. Basic hygiene products include toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, facial tissues, soap, shampoo, deodorant, period products, diapers, wipes, razors, shaving cream, bandages, lip balm, and other products that are essential for bodily health and care.

The scope of hygiene poverty is significant, with our survey revealing that:

- 53%, over half, of women reported struggling to access essential basic hygiene products.





Experiences of hygiene poverty are also exacerbated by identities including race, age, and family size. With:

- 62% of Hispanic or Latino respondents struggling to access basic hygiene products.
- 60% of Black or African-American women struggling to access basic hygiene products.
- 54% of those between the ages of 18-24 struggling to access basic care products.

Survey respondents shared their own perspectives on how access to hygiene products can be improved. With responses advocating for:

- Lower prices of products.
- Increases in awareness of women-centered hygiene product resources.
- Increases in resources that provide essential basic hygiene products that are women-centered.



Change A Life, Shape the Future

We can all contribute to creating access to essential hygiene products for our neighbors. Donations for Dignity is here to help you facilitate change in your community. *Change A Life, Shape The Future* is a program we have created to work with local agencies and volunteers to increase community involvement in obtaining the hygiene products needed for their clients.

Together we can identify what hygiene products your clients need and create a tailored campaign to be able to help your agency to acquire these products.

Donations for Dignity has created partnerships with hygiene companies that provide quality, eco-friendly products. Part of providing dignity to those who need assistance is to ensure they have access to quality products that are both good for the client as well as the environment.

As a partner in our *Change A Life, Shape The Future* campaign, we also work to ensure there are baskets of period products and/or dispensers that provide period products in the restrooms at your agency.

Request a Donations for Dignity barrel for a hygiene-product drive:

hello@donationsfordignity.org

Barrels are delivered to a host site, with all collected donations going directly to a partner organization that promotes access to hygiene products.

To access the toolkit, or to share the resources, visit:

donationsfordignity.org/resources

To view the results of the survey, visit:

donationsfordignity.org/survey

Contact us:

hello@donationsfordignity.org

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Follow us:

Write To Your Elected Officials Guide

Change begins with an individual who decides to take action. Another way to be that individual and create change is through our elected officials. Somethings you can do include:

- Identify your elected official and [contact them](#) to raise awareness and inquire about how they plan to address period poverty, diaper need and/or hygiene poverty.
- Write your elected officials a letter and include data from the Donations for Dignity survey
- Call your elected officials to create awareness of the issue and include data from the Donations for Dignity survey
- [Register to vote](#) and make a plan to vote. Your voice matters!

Tips:

- Be courteous, informative, and brief.
- Use the proper salutation when referring to your legislator.
- Feel free to include personal experiences of the impacts of period poverty/diaper need/hygiene poverty on your life and community.

Phone Call Template

Hello, my name is (insert name), and I am a constituent who lives in (insert name of city/county/state).

I am reaching out to inquire about what (insert legislator's title and name) plans are to improve period poverty/diaper need/hygiene poverty in (insert name of city/county/state).

