

Poverty Sim/ACE Reflection

The official poverty rate in the United States for 2020 was 11.4%. The poverty rate seems to be a up and down slope that increases and decreases over time. The economic factors of our country take part as a reason due to the rates of unemployment and the availability of jobs. Many people do not have access to the resources that they need for assistance, or they do not know where to look for help or there may not be enough help. Watching the videos of the stories of those children who grew up in poverty made me realize how blessed and fortunate I am for the childhood I lived and the life that I am living now.

When I was a young child, I didn't really see how hard my parents worked for my sister and I. They always made sure we had what we needed and tried to give us what we wanted. I always had a place to call home and food on the table. Other children in this country move from place to place in order to keep a roof over their head, and some even have to go to shelters in order to survive. It was astonishing to me how some of the families had to sleep in their car or van because that was the only place they had to lay their head down at night. One thing that was amazing to me was how the children stayed optimistic even through hard times. The children were the ones holding their parents up. Many of the parents struggled with keeping a good occupation that paid well. Even when they did have a job, sometimes it still wasn't enough to pay for their bills and put food on the table. In some states, the cost of living is high, and the wages aren't enough to keep up. They would eat frozen or canned foods often because it would last longer, not spoil, and it's cheaper than buying fresh foods. Many of the children stated that they were hungry often, and they couldn't eat the things they wanted because they didn't have the money to buy it. One trend I saw between the children is that they all knew the way out of the life. They stayed involved in their studies hoping that one day they can attend college and make a better life for themselves. But they even know that college is expensive and they don't have the funds to attend.

In the poverty sim activity, it was hard to make the decisions that were given. You always had to keep in mind how much money you have and think about if spending the money was worth it or not, and maybe even risking some things. It made me realize that there are people out there that live paycheck to paycheck and worry about if they'll make it to the next payday. Even during the game, I was stressing about if I was going to make it to the next payday, or if I was going to run out of money. The poverty sim really showed me that this is how some people live day to day, and the difficult decisions they have to make. Expenses include everything like food, shelter, travel, insurance, emergency funds, and other costs. It really comes down to what is priority and what is not. Some weeks you may have extra money to do certain things, and other weeks you may only have \$20 to last you till the next payday. There were certain things that would come up like the car would break down, or an unexpected illness would happen.

I believe that we need to find more ways to be sure that no one goes hungry in our country. There are great programs that are already in place to help those in need, but how do we stop this trend is the real question. As nurses, we take care of the sick and the vulnerable, and it is our job to not be bias or judgmental. I will be more considerate and aware of what someone may be going through. There may be a patient that comes in with a bad odor, dirty clothes and we are quick to judge, but they may have not eaten in 3 days and not have a place to sleep. For children that act out or steal, this may be the way they seek attention for help, and the only choice they have to eat is to steal food. We can seek resources for them like shelters and housing, and even things like meals on wheels or food banks. I would like to find a way to be involved some way in the community to make a change and help those that are in need.