



## The Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard: Executive Summary and a Call to Action

*"Families are the building blocks of Wyoming communities. Investing in their success is the single most important way we can ensure a vibrant future for our families, businesses, communities, and state."*

**-- Governor Dave Freudenthal**

### The Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard: Investing in the Success of Our Families

The Wyoming Standard, completed in 2004, measures the income required for Wyoming families to be self-sufficient. By using the Standard, we can learn more about what wages are adequate to pay for basic living costs such as housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care. We can use this information to create pathways to self-sufficiency in providing education and training and encouraging the growth of the high-wage sector.

### Key findings of the Wyoming Standard:

❖ **What it takes to live in Wyoming, county-by-county and family-by family.**

*Table 1. Wages needed to reach self-sufficiency in selected Wyoming localities.*

Locality	Hourly wage needed by a single adult with one infant	Hourly wage needed by a single adult with one infant and one preschooler	Annual combined wage needed in a 2-parent family with one infant and one preschooler
Albany County	\$10.66	\$14.05	\$36,901
Campbell County	\$10.63	\$13.51	\$36,246
Carbon County	\$9.36	\$12.38	\$33,140
Fremont County	\$9.93	\$13.15	\$34,457
Laramie County	\$10.61	\$13.46	\$36,171
Natrona County	\$10.18	\$13.13	\$35,481
Niobrara County	\$9.27	\$12.69	\$33,561
Park County	\$10.13	\$13.23	\$35,607
Sheridan County	\$10.66	\$14.05	\$36,901
Teton County	\$17.31	\$21.62	\$52,042

❖ Why public supports, such as food stamps and child care subsidies, are important in achieving self-sufficiency.

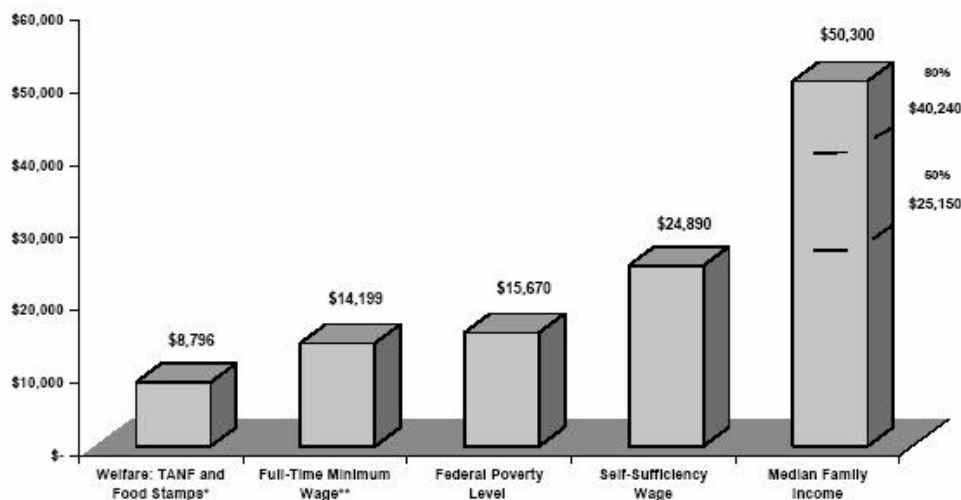
Table 2. Dollar impacts of work supports on monthly costs and the Self-Sufficiency wage of a single parent with one infant and one preschooler in Laramie County.

	#1	#2	#3	WORK SUPPORTS			
	Self-Sufficiency Standard	No Work Supports	Child Support	#4 Child Care	#5 Child Care, Food Stamps, WIC* & Medicaid	#6 Child Care, Food Stamps, WIC & Kid Care CHIP	#7 Housing, Child Care, Food Stamps, WIC & Kid Care CHIP
<b>Monthly Costs:</b>							
Housing	\$536	\$536	\$536	\$536	\$536	\$536	\$362
Child Care	\$835	\$835	\$835	\$61	\$9	\$35	\$9
Food	\$414	\$414	\$414	\$414	\$241	\$285	\$238
Transportation	\$182	\$182	\$182	\$182	\$182	\$182	\$182
Health Care	\$235	\$235	\$235	\$235	\$0	\$73	\$73
Miscellaneous	\$220	\$220	\$220	\$220	\$220	\$220	\$220
Taxes	\$308	\$381	\$341	\$210	\$127	\$149	\$118
Earned Income Tax Credit	-\$106	#	#	#	#	#	#
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	-\$107	-\$130	-\$124	-\$19	\$0	-\$10	\$0
Child Tax Credit (-)	-\$149	-\$20	\$0	-\$25	\$0	\$0	\$0
Child Support			-\$161				
<b>Self-Sufficiency Wage:</b>							
Hourly	\$13.46	\$15.08	\$14.09	\$10.31	\$7.48	\$8.36	\$6.84
Monthly	\$2,368	\$2,654	\$2,479	\$1,814	\$1,316	\$1,471	\$1,203
Annual	\$28,418	\$31,842	\$29,748	\$21,769	\$15,790	\$17,650	\$14,438

#: In the modeling columns, refundable credits are shown as they are usually received, as an annual lump sum when taxes are filed early the next year. The child tax credit is split, with the part that is a credit against taxes owed received monthly, and the refundable portion shown as received annually. EITC is not received as a credit against taxes, so it is shown only annually.

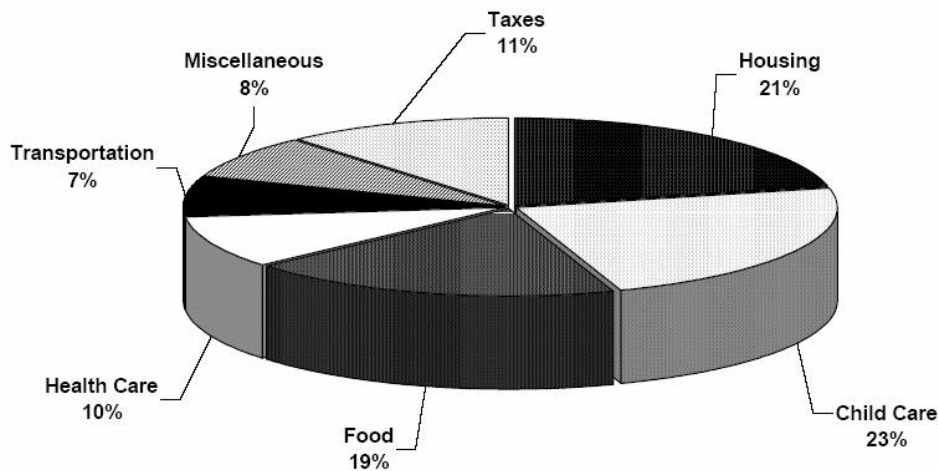
❖ How the Standard matches up to other income benchmarks.

Figure 1. Self Sufficiency wage compared to other benchmarks for a single parent with one preschooler and one school age child in Natrona County.



### ❖ How a family's income is distributed in meeting basic needs.

*Figure 2. Percentage of income needed to meet basic needs, based on the Self-Sufficiency Standard for a family with one adult, one preschooler, and one schoolage child in Laramie County.*



### What self-sufficiency means to Wyoming's families

When families in Wyoming struggle to make ends meet, there is troubling effect. Parents take multiple jobs, or work longer hours, kids get less time with their parents, and overall, there is more stress in the household.

On the other hand, when parents can work in jobs that have decent wages and where they feel valued as an employee, they feel a sense of accomplishment. They spend less time at work, and more time with their children. Children benefit from this security through better school performance and better behavior.

### What self-sufficiency means to Wyoming's communities

When individual families move out of poverty and attain self-sufficiency, it has an effect on our communities and state, too: from increased school attendance to lower crime rates, from less need for public assistance programs to higher job satisfaction and small business stability, communities function better when the people living in them are paid better.

### We all play a role in charting a course . . . from struggle to success

The Wyoming Standard is designed to provide information that can help all of us – policymakers, business leaders, service providers, educators, and families themselves – move more Wyoming people to economic self-sufficiency.

- ❖ **Government** can provide assistance through training opportunities and access to education, along with access to assistance and work supports like Medicaid or childcare assistance.
- ❖ **Businesses** can pay decent wages and benefits. And this can benefit them, for higher pay results in fewer turnovers, greater productivity, less reliance on public supports, and a more active tax base.
- ❖ **Schools and training centers** can prepare students for a career in a high wage sector.
- ❖ **Individuals** must take the responsibility to work to their potential, and to create a plan for moving to self-sufficiency.

## **Creating successful, self-sufficient families . . . a call to action**

We challenge policy makers and community leaders to use the Wyoming Standard to **create an economy that works for everyone** through the following ways:

- ❖ **Educate people about the real costs of living in Wyoming**, as well as the real costs to families and communities when wages are insufficient.
- ❖ **Develop our high-wage jobs sector** through focusing on training programs in high-wage areas, recruiting high-wage businesses into our state, and recognizing current Wyoming businesses that are paving the way with the wages, benefits, and “family-friendly” policies they offer.
- ❖ **Build our educational capacity** through career development and increasing access to educational opportunities.
- ❖ **Value public help** by investing in affordable housing, child care, and health care, and encouraging public supports such as food stamps to be used as a step toward self-sufficiency, not a permanent solution.

## **Conclusion**

While Wyoming experiences this current period of relative wealth, we have an opportunity to reinvest some of our resources into the sustainability of individuals and families. It is only through access to higher education and job training, availability of work supports as a bridge to move workers into higher paying jobs, and empowering the private sector that Wyoming’s families can experience the same degree of success as Wyoming’s economy. In doing so, our self-sufficient residents will, in turn, provide stability for the state for generations to come.

**The Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard is available at  
<http://wyoming.gov/governor/policies/people.asp>**

**For more information, contact the  
Governor’s Planning Office at (307) 777-8514.**

The Wyoming  
Self-Sufficiency  
Standard

