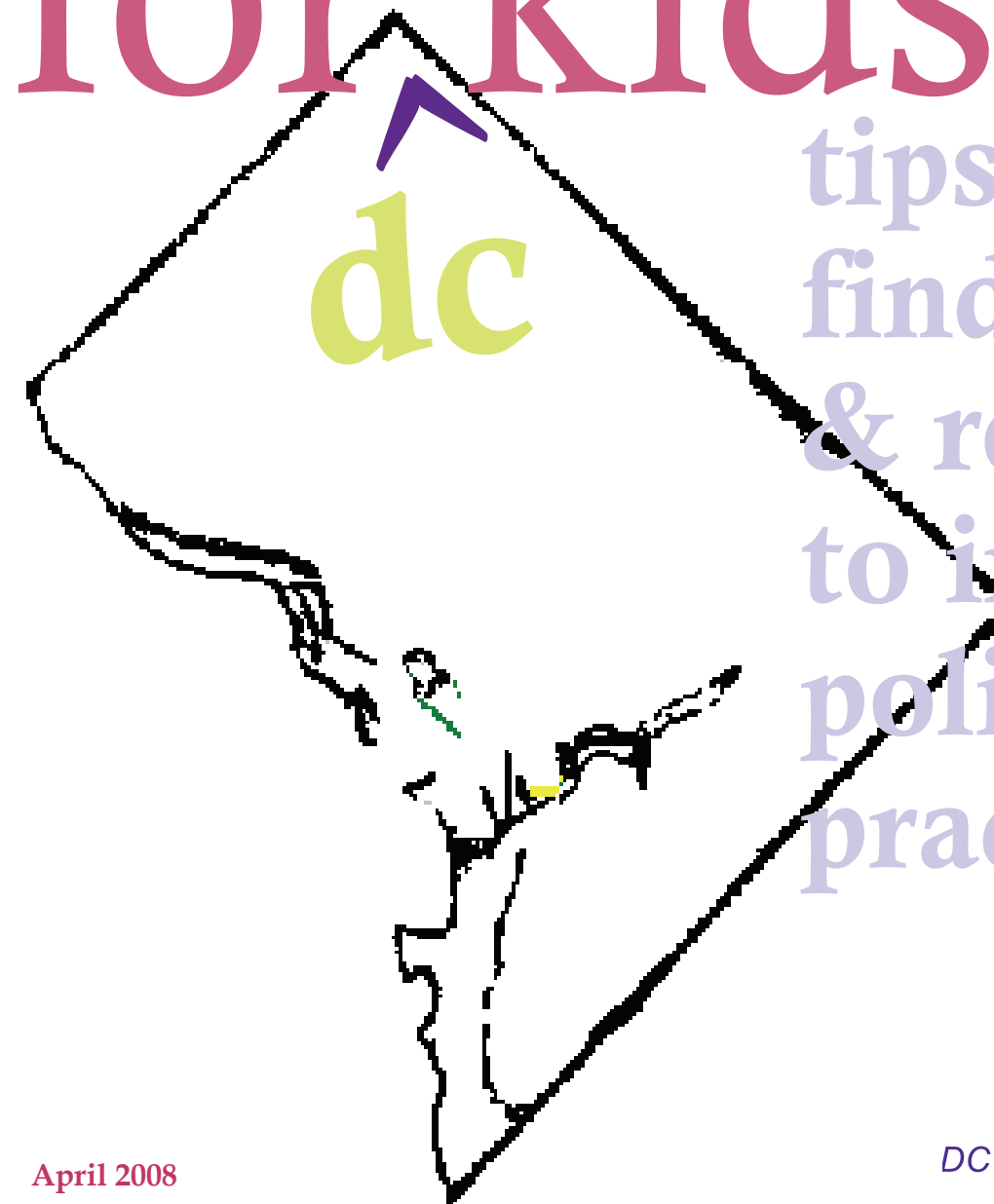


getting connected for kids:



tips on
finding data
& research
to improve
policy and
practice



DC Action for Children

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DC Action for Children



DC Action for Children

Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children (DC ACT) is the District's only nonprofit and independent multi-issue advocacy organization that works on behalf of children, youth and their families. DC ACT believes that every child in the District of Columbia should have the opportunity to reach his or her potential. DC ACT's mission is to improve conditions for children, youth and their families in the District.

DC ACT pursues its mission by:

- informing citizens, public officials, and service providers about issues and policies affecting children and families in the District of Columbia;
- holding the government accountable and promoting public policies which improve the lives of children;
- mobilizing an informed, city-wide constituency for children; and
- empowering families and neighborhoods to advocate for children.

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researching state legislation

- Unfortunately, there is no Thomas for the states, but a close runner-up is <http://www.law.cornell.edu/states/>. This site, operated by the Cornell University Law School, is a "collection of state legal materials gathers, state by state, Internet-accessible sources of the constitutions, statutes, judicial opinions, and regulations for the fifty states, plus D.C., and the U.S. territories and affiliated jurisdictions."
- Library of Congress Guide to State and Local Governments: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html>

researching federal legislation

Everything you need is on Thomas: all versions of bills, references in the Congressional record, Committee reports, schedules, and voting records. You can search by keyword, bill number, date, or member. Getting there is easy: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

- Thomas bill summaries and public laws go back to the 93rd Congress (1973-74), but the actual text of bills is available only from the 101st Congress (1989-90) and later.
- When looking for a specific bill, it helps to know the year it was introduced and the member who introduced it.
- Be very careful to make sure that you have the right version of the legislation! Oftentimes a bill with the same or similar title will be introduced in multiple years, but the text of the bill will differ. Also, a bill can have numerous versions: a House version, a Senate version, amended versions, conference versions, and the “enrolled” bill that ultimately is signed by the president. Check dates carefully and (unless you’re comparing versions of the same bill), go with the latest version of the bill.
- Once a bill is signed by the President, it becomes a “public law” (P.L.) and can be found on the public law section of the Thomas Web site.
- If you search for a bill using a keyword like “child care,” you’ll turn up hundreds of bills introduced in the last 10 years. You won’t want to waste your time with minor bills or far-out bills that went nowhere. The site offers two tools to help — you can search for bills with floor action or enrolled bills sent to the president. You can also search by chamber action.
- The most helpful section of Thomas is the “Bill summary and status” section. This will give you information on who introduced the bill, who is co-sponsoring it, what its status is in the legislative process, a link to the bill text, a link to any committee reports, references to the bill in the Congressional Record, and sometimes a brief summary of the bill.
- Generally, these brief summaries are NOT very helpful. Nor is it incredibly helpful to read the bill. Reading bills takes a lot of practice; they’re extremely legalistic, and bill text often refers to clauses in prior federal laws, so that they make very little sense in English.
- Some ways to find out what a bill is all about: 1) click on the Congressional Record link and read the statement introducing the bill; 2) go to the Web site of the member who introduced the bill and read the press release; 3) if there’s been a committee hearing on the bill, read the testimony and/or committee report, (also available as a link on the “bill summary and status” page); 4) read bill analyses and position statements by third parties. CLASP and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) often prepare summaries that are somewhat neutral; advocacy organizations will present analyses along with their view on the legislation.
- When you’re writing a summary of a bill, visit ALL of the above sources. It should give you a fairly balanced view of what the bill is all about.

what you’ll find inside

- 1 top local research sites
- 2 top local discussion lists, blogs, etc.
- 4 researching dc legislation
- 5 top national research sites
- 9 polling & media sites
- 11 researching federal legislation
- 12 researching state legislation

This document’s purpose is to offer some starting points for research about the conditions of children and families in the District of Columbia. It is by no means comprehensive. We plan to update the guide periodically and welcome ideas about other organizations and data sources that should be included. Please send suggestions to dcaction@dckids.org.

DC Action for Children is grateful to its funders, including the Norman and Diane Bernstein Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation, the Consumer Health Foundation, the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, the Freddie Mac Foundation, the Kaiser Permanente, the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, The Moriah Fund, and the Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust for supporting our work and making it possible for DC ACT to produce advocacy tools such as this guide.

Finally, DC ACT thanks our colleagues who contributed to this guide, including T.J. Sutcliffe at the Arc of the District of Columbia, Mark Ouellette in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, and the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaborative Council.

top local research sites

- DC Government: www.dc.gov. The system for government agency Web sites is: agency abbreviation.dc.gov (for example, www.doh.dc.gov). Exceptions include:
 - ♦Deputy Mayor for Education Website: <http://dme.dc.gov>
 - ♦Mayor's Education Reform Website: <http://edreform.dc.gov>
 - ♦Office of Planning: www.planning.dc.gov
 - ♦DC Public Charter School Board: www.dcpb.org
 - ♦DC Public Schools: www.k12.dc.us
 - ♦Office of the Chief Financial Officer: www.cfo.dc.gov
 - ♦DC Public Library: www.dclibrary.org
 - ♦Office of the DC Auditor: www.dcauditor.org
 - ♦Child Support Services Division (of the Office of the Attorney General): www.csed.dc.gov
 - ♦Board of Elections and Ethics: www.dchoee.org
 - ♦DC Housing Authority: www.dchousing.org
 - ♦Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development: <http://dcbiz.dc.gov/dmped/site/default.asp>
 - ♦Metropolitan Police Department: www.mpdc.dc.gov
- Council of the District of Columbia: www.dccouncil.us. The site includes info about members and their staffs, legislation, the legislative calendar, and much more.

A number of Councilmembers have electronic newsletters or distribute press releases. Check their sites for subscription details.
- Brookings Greater Washington Research Program: <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/washington.aspx>
- Urban Institute's DC research program: <http://www.urban.org/communities/dc/index.cfm>
- DC Watch: www.dccwatch.com. Links to local community and media sites.
- NeighborhoodInfoDC: <http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/>
- DC Fiscal Policy Institute: <http://www.dcfpi.org/>
- DC Primary Care Association: <http://www.dcpca.org/>

media

- Atlantic Monthly (archives free): <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/backissues.htm>
- LA Times: <http://www.latimes.com/>
- Public Agenda: <http://www.publicagenda.org/>
- Roll Call (insider news about Congress): <http://www.rollcall.com/pages/news/>
- The American Prospect (archives free): <http://www.prospect.org/>
- The New Republic: <http://www.tnr.com/>
- The New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/>
- U.S. News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/home.htm>
- Newsweek: http://www.msnbc.com/news/NW-front_Front.asp
- Time: <http://www.time.com/time/>
- Washington Post: www.washingtonpost.com

polling & media sites

polling

- NY Times links to polling sites on the Web: <http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/polls-sites.html>
- Los Angeles Times: <http://www.latimes.com/news/timespoll/>
- Wirthlin Worldwide: <http://www.wirthlin.com/>
- Roper Center for Public Opinion: <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>
- Gallup: <http://www.gallup.com>
- Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/>
- NY Times: http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/polls_index.html
- Pew Center for People and the Press: <http://www.people-press.org/index.htm>
- Tarrance Group (Republican): <http://www.tarrance.com/>
- USA Today/CNN/Gallup: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/pollindex.htm>
- Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/vault/vault.htm>
- Polling Report: <http://www.pollingreport.com/>
- Harris Interactive: http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/
- The Odom Institute for Research in Social Science: http://www.irss.unc.edu/odum/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=7
- ABC News Polling Unit (2005–present): <http://abcnews.go.com/US/PollVault/>
- The Associated Press/IPSOS Poll (2003–present): <http://www.ap-ipsosresults.com/>
- The NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Polls (1999–present): www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/
- Time Magazine/SRBI Polls (2004–present): http://www.srbi.com/timepoll_archive.html

- D.C. Hunger Solutions: <http://www.dchunger.org/>
- DC VOICE: <http://www.dcvoice.org/index.cfm>
- Council for Court Excellence: <http://www.courtexcellence.org/>
- 21st Century School Fund: <http://www.21csf.org/csf%2Dhome/>
- DC Appleseed: <http://www.dcappleseed.org/>
- DC KIDS COUNT: <http://www.dckidscount.org/>
- The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness: <http://www.community-partnership.org/index.php>

top local discussion lists, blogs, etc.

- Policy- and practice-related lists:
 - ♦ *DCPCA Daily Health Alert*: To subscribe, complete the on-line form at http://www.dcpca.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=280
 - ♦ *DC Primary Care Reformer*: To subscribe to this quarterly e-newsletter, go to http://www.dcpca.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=281
 - ♦ *Spreading the Word* from the DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: Sign up by going to <http://npogroups.org/lists/info/dccspreadingtheword>
 - ♦ *Johns Hopkins Items*: <http://www.jhsph.edu/preventyouthviolence>
 - ♦ *Progress Notes*: To subscribe, e-mail subscribe-progressnotes@yahoo.groups.com
- Community/Neighborhood discussion lists: Many communities have electronic discussion lists. Many require membership. The "list of lists" of these discussion groups is <http://www.dctime.com/>.

One of the best sources of information on a city-wide basis is "themail." This is from the folks at dctime; go to www.dctime.com to sign up for "themail." It is published Sundays and Thursdays.

- Other lists:
 - ♦DC CITY DESK by The Progressive Review: To receive updates, e-mail dc@prorev.com with "subscribe dc" in the subject line
 - ♦Barras Alerts: To subscribe to alerts from Jonetta Rose Barras, e-mail subscribe@jrbarras.com with "subscribe" in the subject line. You may also subscribe at <http://www.jrbarras.com/artman/publish/>.
- Blogs and blog-like things:
 - ♦Tom Sherwood's Notebook: Using RSS, keeping up with this local legend is easy! Go to: <http://www.nbc4.com/tomsherwoodsnotebook/index.html>.
 - ♦Raw Fisher: <http://blog.washingtonpost.com/rawfisher/>.
 - ♦City Desk BLOGS: According to the Washington City Paper, this blog features "News, politics, the media, the arts, and more." <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/citydesk/>
 - ♦DCist: <http://dcist.com/>. This is a blog about Washington, DC.
- Advocacy lists:
 - ♦DC Child Advocacy from DC Action for Children: Go to <http://groups.google.com/group/dcchildadvocacy> to read or join
 - ♦People's Property Campaign: Subscribe by e-mailing peoplespropertycampaign-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
 - ♦Rent Control: Subscribe by e-mailing DCCoalitionForRentControl@yahoogroups.com
 - ♦Concerned4DCPS: Subscribe by e-mailing Writer4605@msn.com or at <http://yahoogroups.com/group/concerned4DCPS>
 - ♦SaveOurSchools: Subscribe by going to <http://saveourschoolsdc.org> or e-mailing saveourschoolsdc@yahoogroups.com
 - ♦School Modernization Campaign: Subscribe by e-mailing smc-subscribe@modernizations.org
 - ♦Coalition for Democracy in Education: Subscribe by e-mailing cde-subscribe@democracyineducation.net
 - ♦DC School Advocates: Subscribe by e-mailing sodonnell@21csf.org or nhuwendick@21csf.org

early care and education

- National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center: <http://www.nccic.org/index.cfm>
- National Institute of Early Education Research: www.nieer.org
- Zero to Three: <http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer>
- Child Care & Early Education Research Connections: <http://www.childcareresearch.org/discover/index.jsp>
- Pre-K Now: <http://www.preknow.org/>

youth development

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers: <http://www.ed.gov/21stcccl/>
- Academy for Educational Development: <http://www.aed.org/>
- American Youth Policy Forum: <http://www.aypf.org/>
- The Forum for Youth Investment: <http://forumforyouthinvestment.org/>
- Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago: www.chapinhall.org/category_editor.aspx?L2=62

child support

- National Child Support Enforcement Association: <http://www.spea.indiana.edu/ncsea/search/default.asp>
- Institute for Research on Poverty: <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/research/childsup/cspolicy.htm>

fatherhood

- NPNFF: <http://www.npnff.org>
- National Center for Fathering: <http://www.fathers.com/>
- National Fatherhood Initiative: <http://www.fatherhood.org/>

teen pregnancy/second chance homes

- Florence Crittenton Division of CWLA: <http://www.cwla.org/programs/pregprev/>
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/>
- Alan Guttmacher Institute: <http://www.agi-usa.org/>
- Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention: <http://gcapp.org/>

- Heritage Foundation: <http://www.heritage.org/>
- Institute for Research on Poverty: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>
- Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: <http://www.mdrc.org/>
- Public/Private Ventures: <http://www.ppv.org/>
- Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org/>

children's health

- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Covering Kids and Covering Kids & Families Initiatives (national SCHIP enrollment project): <http://www.coveringkids.org/>. [The project ended in 2007, but information is still available on the site.]
- Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://www.kaisernetwork.org/index.cfm>
- American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://www.aap.org/>
- The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools: <http://www.healthinschools.org/>. They also have a discussion list.
- The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services: <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/>
- Families USA: <http://www.familiesusa.org/>
- National Academy of State Health Policy: <http://www.nashp.org/>
- The National Children's Study: <http://www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov/index.cfm>

child abuse and neglect

- Prevent Child Abuse America: <http://www.preventchildabuse.org/index.shtml>
- National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence: <http://www.nccafv.org/>
- National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect: <http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/>
- American Humane Association: <http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer>
- Child Welfare League of America: <http://www.cwla.org>
- Fight Crime: Invest in Kids: <http://www.fightcrime.org>

researching dc legislation

In the District of Columbia, any party (private organizations, Council members, the Mayor or an Executive Branch agency or a combination) may draft legislation. However, bills can only be introduced by a member of the Council. The Chair may introduce a bill upon the request of the Mayor. (For more on the legislative process in DC, check out "Navigating the Legislative Process" by DC ACT. Available on-line and in print.)

All legislation is tracked in the system called LIMS (Legislative Information Management System). Access to LIMS is via the Council of the District of Columbia Web site: <http://www.dccouncil.us/>. You can search LIMS in a variety of ways:

- status of bill or resolution;
- by member;
- by committee;
- text of bill or resolution;
- Member voting record;
- contract summary;
- by co-sponsor;
- text of an act; and
- search by Member, Council Period, committee, and keyword/phrase. *Important note: You must use Internet Explorer to conduct a CP search; other browsers do not work. The Council is aware of this and is working to fix it (April 2008).*

The D.C. Code is available electronically. There is a link from the Council's home page or you can go directly there with this link: <http://government.westlaw.com/linkedslice/default.asp?rs=gvt1.0&vr=2.0&sp=dcc-1000>. Note: "The contents of these statutes are current through amendments received as of January 25, 2006."

top national research sites

federal government

Almost all federal information - reports, statistics, regulations, speeches, press releases, basic program information, legislation - is available on the Web.

- Your first stop: www.usa.gov, which is the federal Web clearinghouse. From there you can go to all of the other agencies or search by topic.
- All introduced and enacted legislation can be found on Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. This is the Library of Congress-maintained site on the Web. For more on federal legislation, see the section below.
- The *Green Book*, published every two years by the House Ways and Means Committee, contains general descriptions and spending levels for every federal social service program. The latest edition is on-line at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>. Previous editions are available at <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/2000gb/index.htm>.
- You can find information on what the President has requested in his budget each year at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>. However, remember that this is not law; it is the President's request. Actual spending levels are determined by the appropriations bills that Congress is supposed to pass by September 30 of each year. Thomas has a chart detailing the status of all appropriations bills.
- Reports to Congress about policy issues and legislation, as well as audits of federal programs, can be found at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), <http://www.gao.gov/>. Some information dating back to 1968 is on-line. You can also sign up for e-mail notifications of publication releases.
- Sites for specific federal programs or information:
 - ♦ Department of Health and Human Services (e.g., TANF, child care, child abuse, etc.) http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/acf_services.html
 - ♦ State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP): <http://www.hhs.gov/everyamericaninsured/index.html>
 - ♦ Forum on Child and Family Statistics: <http://www.childstats.gov/>
 - ♦ Statistical Abstract of the United States (helpful stats on everything from teen birth rates by state to income, etc.): <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>
 - ♦ Census data: <http://www.census.gov/>
 - ♦ Presidential initiatives: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>
 - ♦ After-School: <http://www.afterschool.gov/>
 - ♦ Health outcomes and indicators: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>
 - ♦ Social Statistics Briefing Room (SSBR): www.whitehouse.gov/fsbr/ssbr.html

states

The state sites vary widely in quality. Some are quite detailed while others are not.

- Each state has its own Web site, usually [www.\(state abbreviation\).gov](http://www.(state abbreviation).gov). You may also find the URLs at this site: www.globalcomputing.com/states.html. (This site also includes listings of counties and cities.)
- Links to all of the state human services agencies are at the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Web site, <http://www.aphsa.org/Links/links-state.asp>.
- National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governors' Association have some information: <http://www.ncsl.org/>, <http://www.nga.org/>.

general children's issues – data, policy

- Annie E. Casey Foundation's national KIDS COUNT: <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/>
- Child Welfare League of America: <http://www.cwla.org/>
- Princeton Center for Research on Child Wellbeing: <http://crcw.princeton.edu/>
- Children Now: <http://www.childrennow.org/>
- Children's Defense Fund: <http://www.childrensdefensefund.org/>
- Child Trends: <http://www.childtrends.org/>
- The Future of Children: <http://www.futureofchildren.org/>
- Research Forum on Children at the National Center on Children in Poverty: <http://www.researchforum.org/>
- National Center on Children in Poverty: www.nccp.org
- Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/index.html>
- Tufts University Child&FamilyWebGuide: <http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/>
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics: <http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/>
- American Legislative Exchange Council: <http://www.alec.org/>
- The Finance Project: www.financeproject.org
- Center for Law and Social Policy: <http://www.clasp.org/>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy: <http://www.policymatters.us/>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <http://www.cbpp.org/>
- Coalition on Human Needs: <http://www.chn.org/>