

During the poverty simulations, I was a single mom of a 14-year-old daughter and a 17-year-old son, who had a pregnant girlfriend and was starting to dabble into drugs. My husband up and left, leaving us with \$10, no transportation, and myself only having a 10th-grade education. We drew cards, and I pulled out the mom's card. We sat as a family initially and prioritized our day before leaving for school and heading to social services.

Knowing my son was a high school dropout and starting down a destructive path, he came with me around town so I could watch him, and he could assist with some errands. I went to social services first, knowing we needed help, and after waiting a bit in line at social services, I was called to school because my daughter was sick. This was frustrating since I was mid-application, and we desperately needed money. After that week, I did manage to attain benefits and a part-time job, and we had some good luck, as well as a notice for our rent.

Trying to get to work, do errands, and keep an eye on my son to keep him out of trouble was a little overwhelming. I did find that having a part-time job was in my favor, as it freed up time to do other things. I found out that community services had free transportation passes and other things, which helped tremendously. It was challenging navigating the schedule of services and hours, and I had to return to areas when they were closed. We were lucky as a family and did work together. In the end, we were positive; all bills were paid, and we spent the last few minutes of week four at home doing family game night.

When my daughter was sent home sick, taking her to the doctor's never crossed my mind. The card didn't specify if the illness was mild or severe, so we went home, and she was old enough to be left alone. My priority then was money to buy food and pay for our rent.

I didn't realize until the debriefing how much theft, crime, or other difficulties were happening to the other families. We were so focused on surviving that it was tough to see around you and help others. Also, I didn't realize how much of a resource the police are to a community. You think they are only around for illegal activities but learning that they assist with transportation and know so many people and resources was a huge eye-opener.

The comment that we didn't take receipts from the vendors is very true; I personally either take photos or have things emailed to me, as I have found that receipts get lost, and clutter my purse. In this scenario, it never specified if we had phones, which I do know Lifeline is a service for phones for low-income families, so we assumed we had one.

I tried to play my role the best I could, but it was hard not to rely on life experiences and know how the system works and what to prioritize to keep a family together. We all agreed in our group that we probably wouldn't have succeeded if we had changed roles.

I talked to others after our SIMS and found out we were being watched by others who were waiting to steal from us, and our family was clueless. Knowing that people were desperate and were watching other vulnerable targets to steal from was very unnerving. It really shows how stressful and dangerous situations can be and how easily things could have changed if our family wasn't as diligent with our things.