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## Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC)

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### Background

A 2003 report commissioned by the Southern Institute on Children and Families states that one out of five southern workers lives below 200% of the poverty level (\$38,700 annual income for a family of four). Families at or below this income level face daily struggles in meeting basic needs and the challenges they face can affect their stability and productivity on the job.

Workforce issues faced by lower-income individuals are reflected in high absenteeism, high turnover and low morale. Lower-income parents, especially single parents are particularly susceptible to barriers that interfere with job stability.

Children in lower-income families are placed at greater risk due to unmet basic needs and these conditions place them at a disadvantage in many areas of child well-being. Improving the employment stability of their parents and other caretakers contributes to a more stable family economic environment and greater opportunities for child development and educational achievement.

The Southern Institute established the Southern Business Leadership Council (SBLC) in 2002. Participation of business leaders elevates the goal of improving the well-being of children and establishes a connection to the strategic growth and development of the southern region. The SBLC is chaired by former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and is composed of representatives from banking, construction, health insurance, health services, hospitality, information technology, manufacturing, retail, telecommunications and corporate philanthropy, as well as local/national Chamber of Commerce representatives. The SBLC is focused on developing research-based employment stability action strategies that will mutually benefit families and employers in communities across the South.

The development of public and private sector action strategies requires knowledge from both workers and employers on issues that impact employment stability. A body of research is available on workforce stability barriers from the perspective of lower-income individuals. There is less information on employer views regarding issues that affect the ability of lower-income workers, especially parents, to be stable and productive on the job. Having employer perspectives is a critical component in the development of public and private sector actions that support and promote employment stability.

### Southern Business Leadership Council Employment Stability Action Plan Initiative

To gather employer insight on issues and solutions related to employment stability, employer dialogue projects will be conducted in selected southern communities. Upon completion, an analysis of all projects will be presented to assist the SBLC in developing the southern regional blueprint for action, titled the *Southern Business Leadership Council Employment Stability Action Plan*. The Action Plan will identify local, state, federal and private sector policy issues to be addressed and will outline promising practices that can be replicated in states and communities across the South.

### About the Southern Institute

The Southern Institute on Children and Families is an independent, 501(c) (3) non-profit public policy organization founded in 1990 and is based in Columbia, South Carolina. The mission of the Southern Institute is to improve the well-being of children and families through knowledge, leadership and action. Additional information on the Southern Institute is available at [www.thesoutherninstitute.org](http://www.thesoutherninstitute.org) and by calling (803) 779-2607. The Southern Institute contact for the Southern Business Leadership Council is Sarah Shuptrine, President and CEO.