MAKING CHOICES: HOW WILL YOU INVEST YOUR RESOURCES?

You are married. Both you and your spouse work and have a son, 14 and a daughter, 9. If you had a "15-candy-budget" to spend every month, how would you spend it? Place the required number of candies to indicate your spending choices. You have to make a choice for each category (you can't skip any categories).

CATEGORY	A (1 CANDY)	B (2 CANDIES)	C (3 CANDIES)
HOUSING	Studio apartment (one bedroom), one bath, unfurnished, no patio/deck/yard, street parking only (no covered parking space), stove only ◯	Three bedroom, one bath apartment, unfurnished, covered patio, one covered parking space, stove and refrigerator ◯ ◯	Two bedroom, one and a half bathroom house, unfurnished, small fenced yard, two-car garage, stove, refrigerator and dishwasher ◯ ◯ ◯
HEALTHCARE	No health insurance (you pay for all health related costs) ◯	Health insurance for you through your employer but no health insurance for your family members ◯ ◯	Health insurance for you and your family through your employer ◯ ◯ ◯
FOOD (per person)	One meal per day ◯	Two meals per day ◯ ◯	Three meals per day plus snacks ◯ ◯ ◯
TRANSPORTATION	Walk or bike everywhere, no public transit available ◯	Walk, bike or take public transit ◯ ◯	Own your own car ◯ ◯ ◯
TECHNOLOGY	Basic cell phone (non-smart phone), no computer, no internet access ◯	Smartphone with internet access, but no computer ◯ ◯	Home computer, reliable high-speed internet, smartphone, and streaming services ◯ ◯ ◯
CHILD CARE	Under supervision of a family member ◯	A licensed day care, but no early education training ◯ ◯	A provider with proven high quality care and training in early education ◯ ◯ ◯
SHOPPING	One grocery store within walking distance, no mall within 20 miles ◯	Grocery store across the street from your home and a mini-mall within a mile ◯ ◯	Two grocery stores nearby and a large mall within walking distance ◯ ◯ ◯

UNITED WAY
of the Plains

MAKING CHOICES INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is a great way to explain the tough choices income limited families are forced to make every day.

- Make copies of the game board. Participants can work individually or in teams of 2 or 3.
- Provide each group with 15 candies. Smarties work well because there are 15 in each roll.
  - Tell each participant or team their candies will become symbolic of their "budget" and not to eat their candies until the end of the game!
- Explain that for the purposes of the game each person or team is to pretend…
  - They're married with 2 children.
  - One adult in the household is working full-time and the other is working two part-time jobs.
  - Both make minimum wage.
- The family has a limited budget and only 15 candies to spend. They have some tough decisions to make!
- Participants must study their choices in each row and invest their candies with 1, 2 or 3 candies depending on what's most important to them. They cannot skip a row.
- After they're done making their choices, ask the group how it felt to invest their candies. (Usually the response is, "There weren't enough candies!")

Unexpected expense occurs

- Now tell them there's been a change. One of their children has a strep throat and has to see the doctor. In order to get the child the health care the family must give up 2 candies.
- Tell the group to take off 2 candies and adjust the rest as needed.
- Tell them there's been another change. Their spouse just got laid off with no severance pay. They have to take off 4 candies to adjust.
- Let them go through the exercise of taking off the 4 candies and adjusting the rest.

How United Way programs can help this family

- Ask participants for ideas of how this family can use United Way resources
- If anyone says food, shelter or emergency shelter, give them 2 candies.
- If anyone says providing their children with after school programs, give them 2 candies.
- If anyone says job training programs, give them 2 candies.
- If anyone says call 2-1-1, give them 1 candy. Then ask for other participants to name referral services from 2-1-1. For each referral service, like child health care, energy assistance, crisis intervention, counseling, legal assistance or suicide prevention, give that participant or team 2 candies.

Moral of the story

Many of our neighbors are working hard to overcome barriers like these to get ahead. Together with supporters like you, we can connect people to the opportunities they need to reach their potential and make our community a place where everyone can thrive. From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity and financial security, no challenge is too big for us when we work together. **United is the way we are building a better future for everyone.**