ENSURING COMMUNITY HEALTH BY ACHIEVING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Health Equity and Early Childhood

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BARHII meeting
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Neuroscience, Molecular Biology, and the Childhood Roots of Health Disparities
Building a New Framework for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Jack P. Shonkoff, MD
W. Thomas Boyce, MD
Bruce S. McEwen, PhD

A scientific consensus is emerging that the origins of adult disease are often found among developmental and biological disruptions occurring during the early years of life. These early experiences can affect adult health in 2 ways—either by cumulative damage over time or by the biological embedding of adversities during sensitive developmental periods. In both cases, there can be a lag of many years, even decades, before early adverse experiences are expressed in the form of disease. From both basic research and policy perspectives, confronting the origins of disparities in physical and mental health early in life may produce greater effects than attempting to modify health-related behaviors or improve access to health care in adulthood.

JAMA. 2009;301(2):2252-2259
www.jama.com
“Despite increasing evidence of the long-term effects of early adversity on life-long health, little attention has been paid to...the reduction of significant stressors affecting everyday life for vulnerable young children and their parents.”

Shonkoff et al, 2009
Reducing health disparities means investing in healthy environments for children.

Traumatic childhood events are associated with prevalence of:

• coronary artery disease
• chronic pulmonary disease
• cancer
• alcoholism
• depression
• drug abuse
• mental health problems
• teen pregnancies
• cardiovascular risk factors, such as obesity, physical inactivity and smoking.

Shonkoff et al, 2009
BARHII Framework for Reducing Health Inequities

- Social Inequities
- Institutional Power
- Living Conditions
- Risk Behaviors
- Disease and Injury
- Mortality

Current Public Health Practice

- Class
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender
- Immigration
- Sexual Orientation

- Schools
- Corporations and Businesses
- Physical Environment
- Residential Segregation and Concentrated Poverty
- Social Environment

Living Conditions

Risk Behaviors

Disease and Injury

Mortality
Poverty in the Bay Area

Percentage in Poverty:
- 30.0%+
- 20.0-29.9%
- 10.0-19.9%
- 5.0-9.9%
- <5.0%
- Not applicable
1 in 3 newborns in Alameda County are born into families who are struggling to make ends meet.
Neighborhood Poverty Matters for Health

7 year difference in life expectancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Poverty Level</th>
<th>Life Expectancy (in Years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10% (Affluent)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20%</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%+ (Very High Poverty)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of residents living in poverty

Source: Alameda County Vital Statistics files, 2008-2010
Compared to a White child in the Oakland Hills, an African American child born in East Oakland is...

- **2 times** more likely to be born low birth weight
- **12 times** less likely to have a mother with a college degree
- **21 times** more likely to live in poverty
- **3 times** less likely to read at grade level
- **6 times** more likely to be unemployed
- **2.5 times** more likely to die of stroke

**Cumulative impact:**
15 year difference in life expectancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNEQUAL NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS</th>
<th>MATTER FOR HEALTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income, employment, and wealth</td>
<td>Education and quality schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from violence and incarceration</td>
<td>Freedom from chronic stress and mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality, affordable housing</td>
<td>Public transportation and safe streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy vs. unhealthy land uses</td>
<td>Clean air, soil, and water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disinvested Communities

- Limited/Unsafe Parks
- Crime
- Fast Food Restaurants
- Liquor Stores
- Poor Performing Schools
- Pollution and Toxic Exposures
- Limited Public Transportation
- Absence of High Quality Financial Institutions
- Predatory Lenders

Communities of Opportunity

- Parks
- Safe/Walkable Streets
- Grocery Stores
- Good Schools
- Clean Air
- Public Transportation
- Good Jobs
- Strong Local Businesses
- Financial Institutions

Source: Adapted from PolicyLink
WE’RE IN THIS TOGETHER