



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

HOMELESSNESS AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND DISABILITY PREVENTION

A Congressional briefing was held by a group of advocacy organizations that addressed homelessness. Presenters at the briefing were members of Congress, homeless advocates, service providers for the homeless and researchers on the impact of homelessness on children and their mothers.

Summary Homelessness can have a devastating impact on families and especially children. Experiences and relationships in life play a critical role in health and readiness of children to learn. The domains of development are interdependent and cumulative and they play out in social environments associated with homelessness. There are several social determinants of health that may diminish emotional health related to homelessness. Some of the social determinants of health are lack of affordable housing, economic insecurity, temporary living conditions, lack of fiscal resources for essential travel, ineffective services that are not aware of family homelessness limited access to resources and supports associated with health. Causes of homelessness are poverty, loss of employment, domestic violence, natural disasters and others.

Disability Prevention Environments with adverse social conditions for vulnerable families who are homeless can diminish health and contribute to disability. Homeless children experience more exposure to familial stress, increased anxiety, depression, have behavioral problems and lower educational achievement, greater risk of developmental delays, poor health, and a weak foundation for emerging cognitive abilities. All of these social determinants of health can contribute to a poor foundation for emerging cognitive abilities and disability. There are violent acts against the homeless that have adverse health impacts. Trauma is a serious consequence of homelessness. It impacts on development of emotional health of children and stresses mental health of adults. Trauma can result from lack of documents such as health records and birth certificates required for enrollment in safety net programs.

Activity There is support for the Healthy Families America Act which is designed to reduce child maltreatment, improve parent child interaction, promote family self sufficiency, and ensure healthy child development of low income families. Forty-six percent of U.S, infants and toddlers live in low income families. Federal funds for eligible children and families for Early Head Start are reached by 3% of eligible families. Programs are not serving the homeless and at risk families well.

Principle The social safety net should eliminate homelessness.