

# ***Community Focus Bulletin:*** ***Creating Community Conversations***



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## ***Housing, Health, Poverty & Policy***

The Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network recently released its strategic plan. It ties together the factors leading to poverty, these being:

- Income Security
- Housing
- Basic needs
- Employment & training
- Food security
- Community hubs

Each of these factors impact health and well-being. To obtain a high quality of life you require each of these factors to be balanced. Housing as one of these critical factors plays a major role in health and quality of life.

Children's HealthWatch is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and children's health and policy experts. While the network is committed to improving children's health in America its research provides our communities with direction for future policy development.

Affordable and stable housing plays a critical role in supporting the health and wellbeing of children. Research recently completed by Children's HealthWatch shows public investment in housing—including housing for homeless families and rental assistance for food-insecure families—improves the health outcomes of vulnerable infants and young children and lowers health care spending.

### **Some key findings:**

- When compared to children who were never homeless: ☐ Children who experienced pre-natal homelessness (i.e., their mothers were homeless during pregnancy but were housed after their birth) were 20 percent more likely to have been hospitalized since birth.
- Children who experienced post-natal homelessness (i.e., their mothers were housed during pregnancy but were homeless when the children were infants and/or toddlers) were 22 percent more likely to have been hospitalized since birth.
- Children who experienced both pre- and post-natal homelessness were 41 percent more likely to have been hospitalized since birth.

### Key directions from the report:

- Investments in programs that house families in need and have the potential to reduce public spending on health care can be a double win for public policy.
- Given the significant impact stable and affordable housing has on the health of children, policymakers should consider how to expand investment in affordable housing and services for vulnerable families to improve the health outcomes of young children and reduce health care spending.

The following strategies can expand access to affordable housing for vulnerable, low-income families and help them overcome many of the challenges they face:

- Expanding funding for rental assistance programs can reduce the number of homeless and vulnerable families by increasing the number of eligible families (for rent supplements ) made affordable by rental assistance.
- Creating more affordable housing suitable for families can help families find a place to land.
- Ensuring access to supportive services for families receiving rental assistance can help vulnerable families resolve their complex needs.

Questions to our community that have been posed by the Affordable Housing Action Committee:

1. How many more affordable housing units are needed to reduce local waiting lists in Peterborough?
2. Are rent supplements an alternative to building more units?
3. As a community, will we be able to reduce poverty as the local strategy calls for, if we do not increase access to affordable/rent appropriate housing?

(For full report go to: INSIGHTS from Housing Policy Research  
[http://media.wix.com/ugd/19cfbe\\_4d4761b6e25b416584cd348504660cb4.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/19cfbe_4d4761b6e25b416584cd348504660cb4.pdf))

Source: Housing as a Health Care Investment Affordable Housing Supports Children's Health with credit to Megan Sandel, MD, MPH; John Cook, PhD, MAEd; Ana Poblacion, MSc; Richard Sheward, MPP; Sharon Coleman, MS, MPH; Janet Viveiros, MPP; and Lisa Sturtevant, PhD

For more information about our upcoming Community Focus Bulletins go to

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