

**Poverty**

>

**Homelessness**

>

**TRAUMA**

**Early & chronic exposures to stressors related to poverty cause vulnerabilities including:**

- **physiological disruptions**
- **changes in brain architecture and reflective functioning**
- **each..... resulting in lifelong physical and mental health consequences**

• (Ellison & Fallon, 2021)

## Demographics & Numbers: They Tell the Story

- Infancy is the age at which a person is most likely to become homeless in the US
- Approximately half of the children staying in HUD shelters are under the age of six

(SchoolHouse Connection, 2020)

# Children Experiencing Homelessness Experience:

- Lower birth rates
- Inadequate nutrition
- Disturbances of sleep
- Higher levels of childhood illnesses
- Delayed development
- Poor educational outcomes
- Toxic stress and complex trauma
- Significant behavioral and mental health issues
- Child welfare involvement
- CASE STUDY

# Homelessness from a Developmental Perspective

Infants, Toddlers & Preschoolers are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of trauma-



# Impact of Homelessness on Pregnancy



- Homelessness interferes with establishing the positive prenatal characteristics that promote optimal development for the newborn, including:



- adequate prenatal care
- mentally preparing for parenthood
- logistically preparing for the birth
- forming impressions of the new baby
- visualizing where the baby will “be”
- ***the formation of positive, secure attachment patterns***

# Impact of Homelessness on Infants

- Primary developmental task of infancy is to establish security & trust—parents' task is to support the infant through responsive and consistent caregiving.
- Homelessness works against this primary developmental task due to:
  - unpredictable & inadequate physical environments
  - inability to meet basic needs
  - exposure to extreme temperatures
  - overcrowded & over stimulating living conditions

**EdAdvance**  
Educate • Collaborate • Innovate



# Impact of Homelessness on Toddlers

- Primary developmental task of toddlers is to develop a sense of independence & identity—parents' task is to support the toddler through scaffolding for regulation and the provision of a safe, secure environment.
- Homelessness works against this primary developmental task due to:
  - poorly maintained & unsafe environments
  - restrictions to toddler's opportunity for free exploration
  - pressure on parents to manage behavioral outbursts & power struggles
  - absence of developmentally appropriate materials & activities
  - feeling of parenting under a “microscope”—leads to embarrassment



# Impact of Homelessness on Preschoolers

- Primary developmental tasks of preschoolers are to develop a recognition of emotional states of others, separating from parents, and to develop social competence with peers & adults—parents' task is to provide the preschooler with external support in understanding social situations and facilitating relationship building with peers & adults.
- Homelessness works against these primary developmental tasks due to:
  - inability to provide a structured, organized environment: or the toys, books & activities that promote development
  - unruly behavior in children as they get older may cause eviction resulting in additional stress
  - parents under stress may themselves model poor interpersonal skills with others



# In summary:

- The most significant protective factor for young children facing adversity is having the support of at least one stable and committed relationship with a trusted parent, caregiver or other adult.

Case Study sharing

How we support families.....

# Supports & Resources for Families

- Connect with local housing support providers
- Connect with your local school district McKinney Vento Liaisons
- Learn about local early care & education providers- especially Head Start, School Readiness, and other federally & state funded programs
- **ASK** about younger children in the home!
- Screen children in shelters, visit shelters

