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EMBARGOED UNTIL February 21, 2013

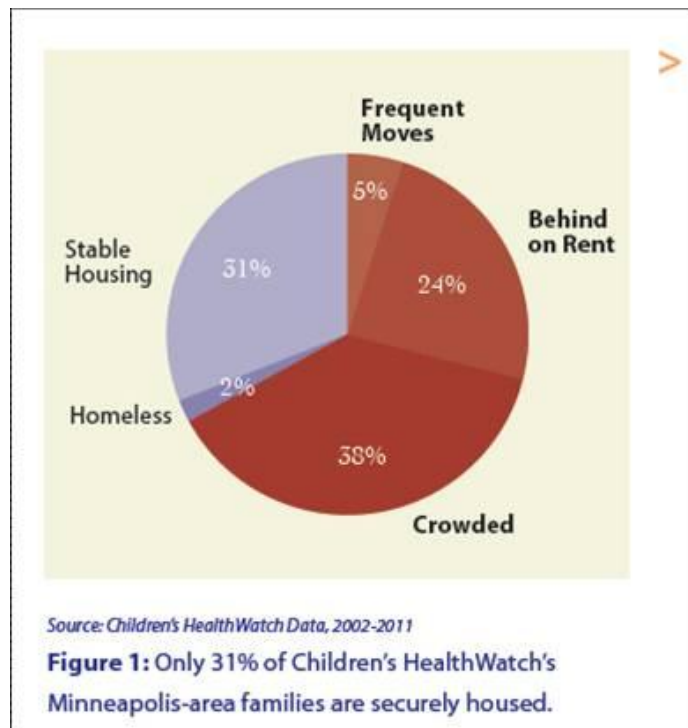
Children's HealthWatch Report Studies Housing Insecurity and Child Health in Minneapolis

Survey finds that housing security improves health and development among young children

St. Paul, MN (Embargoed until February 21, 2013, 12:01am) – A new study released by Children's HealthWatch found that 67 percent of low-income families surveyed at Hennepin County Medical Center were housing insecure. Housing insecure families had moved frequently (two or more times in the last 12 months), were crowded (more than two people per bedroom or doubled up temporarily with another family for financial reasons), or were behind on rent at any point in the last 12 months.

Rental costs have risen rapidly in the Twin Cities, straining the budgets of families with children, especially low-wage workers and the unemployed. In the Minneapolis area, fair market monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$900, more than \$500 in excess of what is considered affordable for a full-time minimum wage employee earning \$7.25/hour. (Out of Reach 2012, National Low Income Housing Coalition).

According to the report, young, low-income children in Minneapolis who were housing insecure were also more likely to be in fair to poor health, and at risk of developmental delays, compared to low-income children who had secure housing. Families who were behind on rent struggled to meet other basic needs and were more likely to have difficulty providing enough food for their families and keeping their homes warm in winter and cool in summer. Previous research by Children's HealthWatch has shown that both of these conditions put children's health and development at risk.



The survey was administered to 6,000 low-income caregivers of children under 4 who received care at Hennepin County Medical Center between 2005 and 2011. Dr. Diana Cutts, Assistant Chief of Pediatrics at HCMC, is the Principal Investigator for Children’s HealthWatch in Minneapolis.

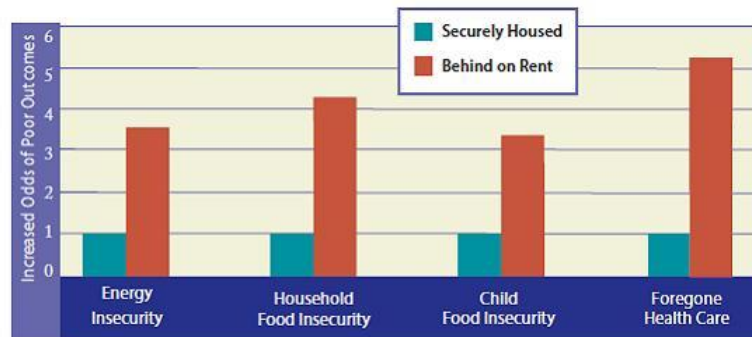
Dr. Diana Cutts stated:

“From a medical perspective, we know that stable housing is a key factor in the health and development of children—even for the very youngest child. Yet so many children who come through our doors do not have a secure home. Policy solutions should consider housing subsidies as an effective prescription to protect children’s health and brain development.”

Liz Kuoppala, Executive Director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless stated:

“Child homelessness has returned to peak recession levels in Hennepin County. Overflow shelters are full. Young children are the new face of homelessness. This new research shows the urgency and necessity of strategic investments in basic housing programs. Supports, like rent subsidies, can give low-income children an equal chance at healthy development and doing well at school.”

Figure 2:
Minneapolis-area families behind on rent struggle to pay for other basic needs.
All comparisons statistically significant at $p < 0.05$
Source: Children’s HealthWatch Data, 2002-2011



Policy Recommendations

Research from Children’s HealthWatch found that children living in subsidized housing were more likely to be food secure and in good health compared to children whose families were on the waiting list for housing support. Investments in affordable housing will improve the health of children in early childhood—a period of rapid growth and brain development.

The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, with the statewide *Homes for All* coalition, supports an additional \$50 million investment in the 2014-2015 state budget for homelessness prevention, supportive services, and workforce housing to address rising homelessness and housing shortages in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is a statewide coalition of 150 direct service organizations. MCH's mission is to generate public policies, community support, and local resources, to end homelessness in Minnesota. www.mnhomelesscoalition.org

Children's HealthWatch is a non-partisan pediatric research center that monitors the impact of public policies and economic conditions on the health of low-income young children. www.childrenshealthwatch.org
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