

“Homelessness does not define who a person is or where they will go in life. It is an experience which anyone can have for any length of time. The key to making a difference and supporting someone experiencing homelessness is to demonstrate empathy to help them as they choose what to do next.”

Lisa Phillips, NC Homeless Education Program

"The instability of homelessness often robs young children of the deserved joys of family life. All of us need to be committed to the development of stable, supportive family environments so that ALL children can experience joy."

Tom Vitaglione, NC Child



A saying attributed to Jewish leader Hillel the Elder says "If not us, who? And if not now, when?" Early childhood leaders must engage in the struggle to bring equitable, quality, childcare services to underserved communities. In addition, we must educate others about the plight of our homeless children and families. How do we do this? We educate and advocate. We know the statistics. We can put a face and name with the statistics. It's our professional and human responsibility to make sure we are taking care of the babies and their families. It's up to us! The time is now! **Macy Jones, Head Start State Collaboration**



“It’s high time for a refocus on early childhood when we think about policies to eliminate housing instability and homelessness—especially now as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19. We know our data undercounted young children experiencing homeless prior to the pandemic. Now our efforts are even more urgent.”

Becki Planchard, NC DHHS DCDEE



Innovative Early Childhood Services for Families Experiencing Homelessness:

A Statewide Conversation

Yay Babies!

NC DHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education

Child Care Services Association

NC State University, Department of Psychology

Agenda

- Our charge: Iheoma Iruka, PhD
- Innovative practices:
 - Parent's view: Maria Velasco
 - Early childhood education providers
 - Homeless services providers
- National perspective: Barbara Duffield
- Dreaming & Brainstorming
- Closure and Survey (with drawing!)





Iheoma Iruka,
PhD

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Innovative Early Childhood Services for Families Experiencing Homelessness

A Statewide Conversation

Iheoma U. Iruka, PhD

Research Professor, Department of Public Policy
Fellow, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG)
Founding Director, Equity Research Action Coalition at FPG

Keynote for a project of the NC DHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education with NC State University, Child Care Services Association and Yay Babies
November 3, 2021



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Science of Early Development

Early experiences are essential for **building brain** connections that underlie healthy development.

Early adversity can change the **timing of critical periods** of brain development.

Healthy development of the child begins in the **preconception period**.

Supportive relationships between the child and the adults in life are **essential** and buffer against stress.



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Source. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *Vibrant and Healthy Kids: Aligning Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity*. The National Academies Press.
<https://doi.org/10.17226/25466>

Lessons from the Science of Early Development

The influence of **access to basic resources** prenatally is powerful and limit chronic stress and help close racial and economic disparities.

Both **institutional racism** and interpersonal experiences of discrimination can influence the health and well-being of both children and adults in many ways.

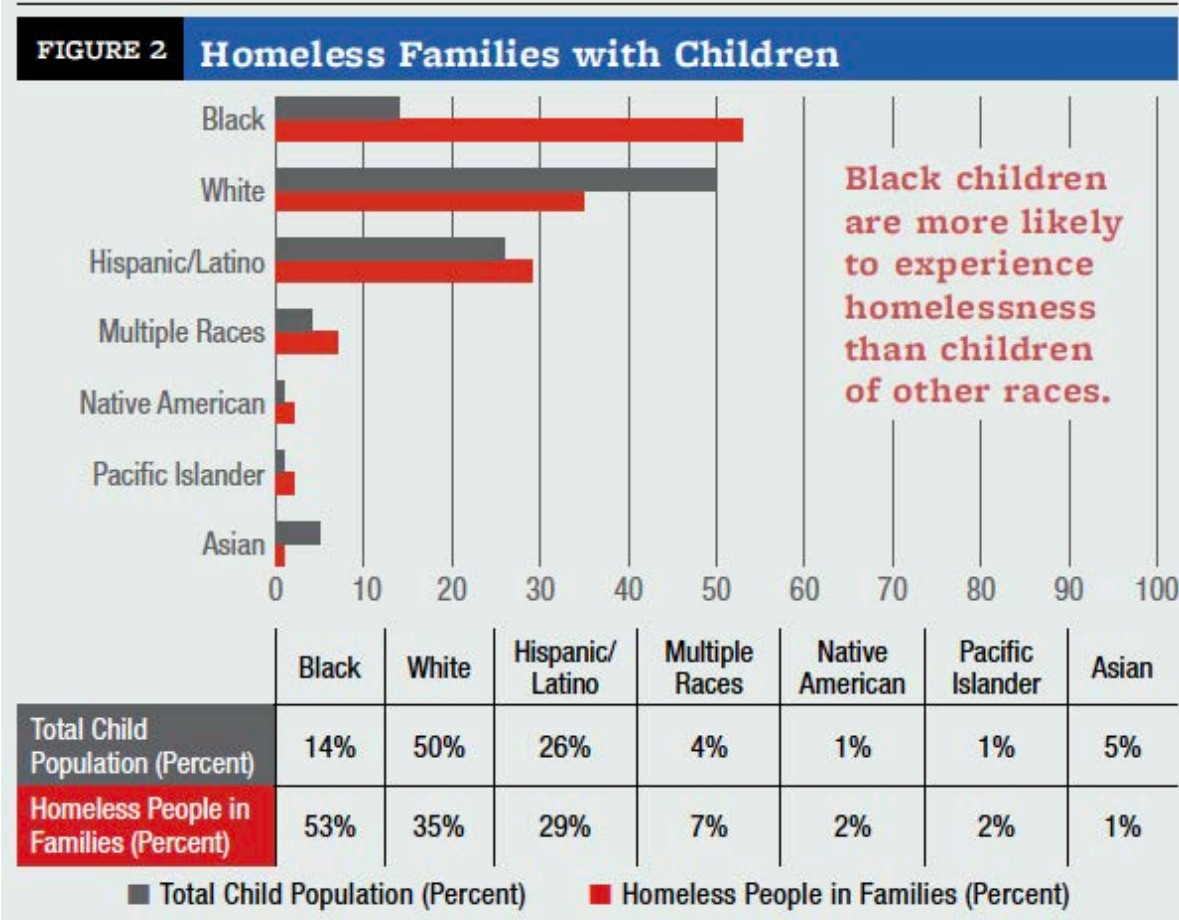
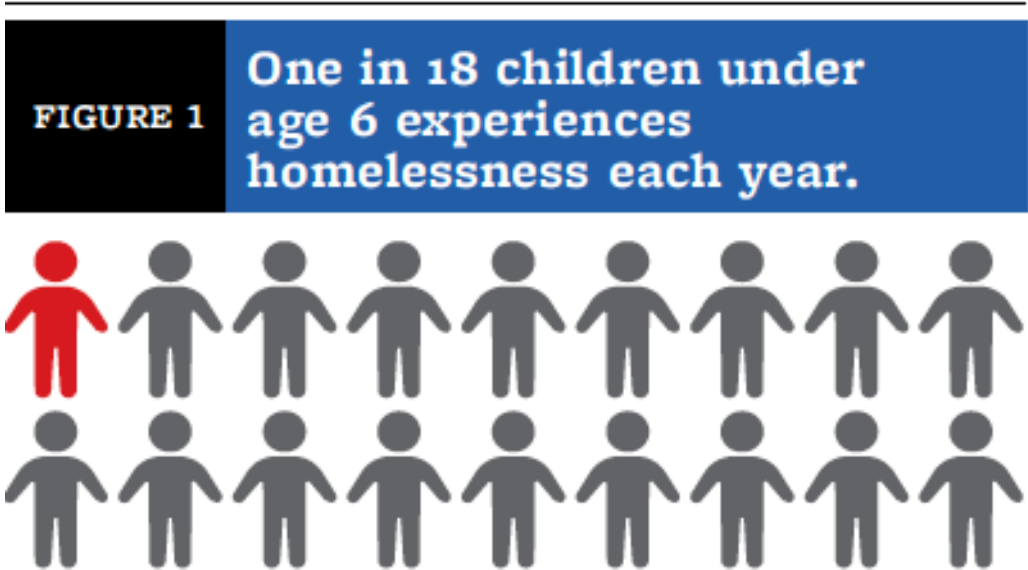


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Source. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *Vibrant and Healthy Kids: Aligning Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25466>

Key Data from Child Care Services Association





Black Parents and Their Babies: Attending to the First 1,000 Days



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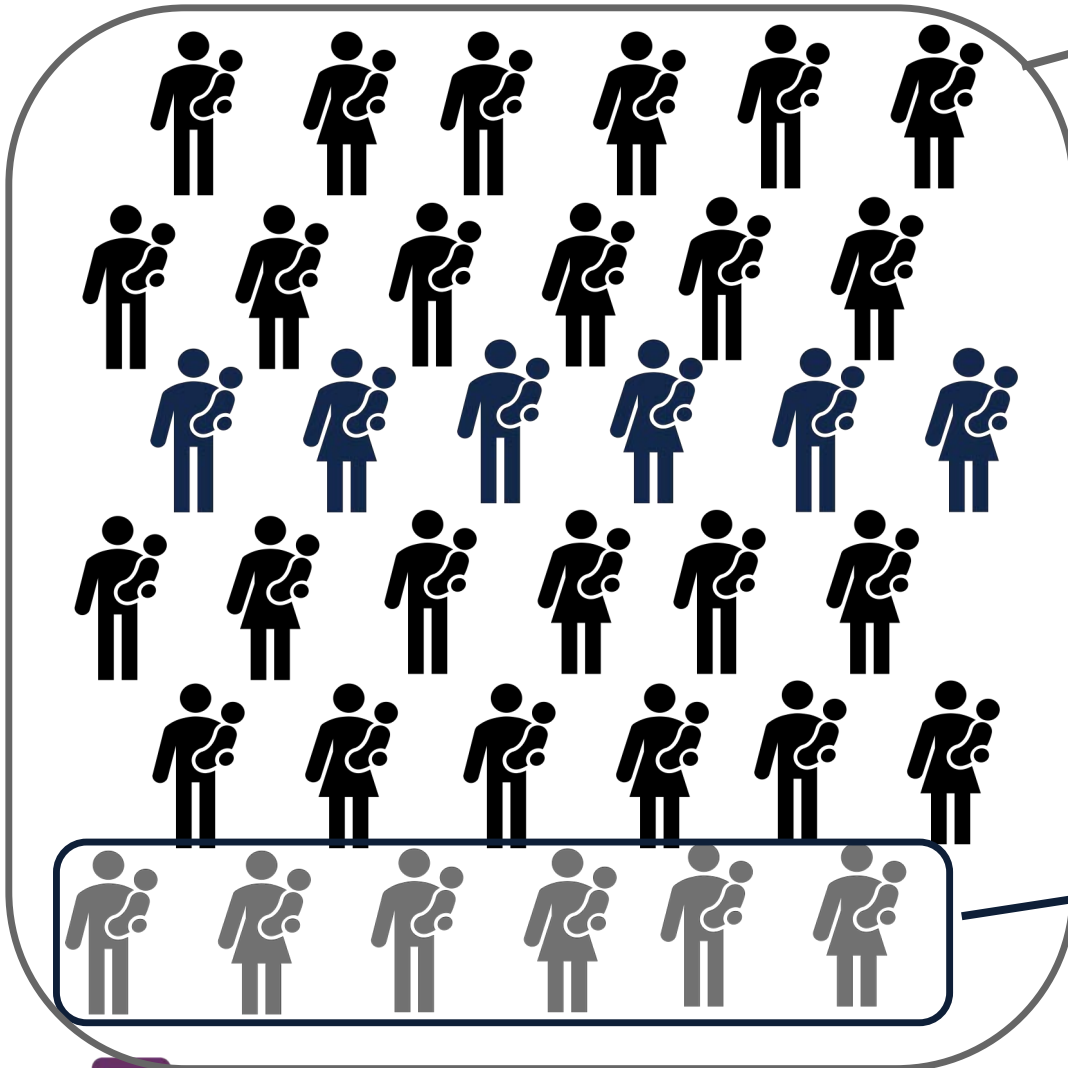


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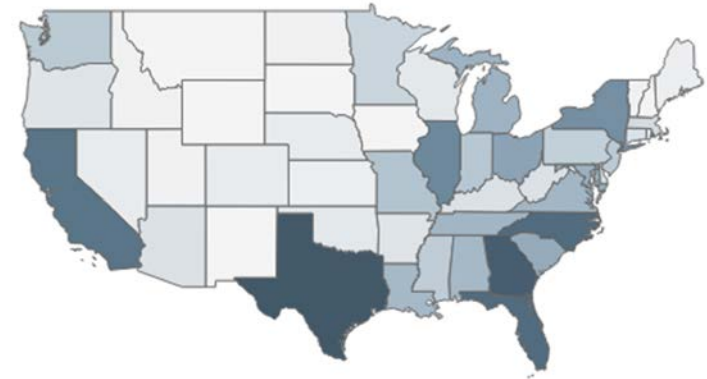
Black families and babies experience multiple adversities prior to and after birth. There is also a growing understanding of the cultural wealth that Black families use to navigate against structural racism and other racialized experiences.

Black Parents and Baby Data



768 Black families/caregiver

- Surveyed between April – March 2021
- Average household income of \$56,097
 - higher than the 2019 median income for Black households of \$45,438
- 7% immigrant caregivers
- Majority English-speaking households
- Representing 43 states and DC



Survey focus areas

- Surveyed families about their experiences with racism and discrimination, financial security, mental health, wellbeing, early care and education options



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Over a third of families in poverty have hard time paying for housing; almost 20% of Black middle-income families have difficulty with housing

Table 1. Black Families' and All Families' Material Hardships

	Black Families with Babies		All Families with Babies	
	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Difficulties Paying for Basic Needs (Hard/Very Hard)	32.29%	7.65%	29.22%	5.99%
Difficulty Paying for: ^a				
Utilities	45.34%	20.77%	45.53%	11.31%
Housing	34.46%	17.49%	35.39%	10.04%
Food	30.32%	16.94%	30.60%	9.47%
Early Care and Education	18.13%	13.67%	12.68%	6.57%
Health Care	10.88%	11.48%	13.07%	7.75%
Material Hardships (3 or More)	29.02%	16.39%	29.09%	8.84%
Receiving Public Benefits	53.91%	18.58%	48.33%	9.39%
Access to Free Food	48.96%	22.95%	44.61%	13.63%

Note. Black families with babies N = 651; Full sample with babies N = 7,242; RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

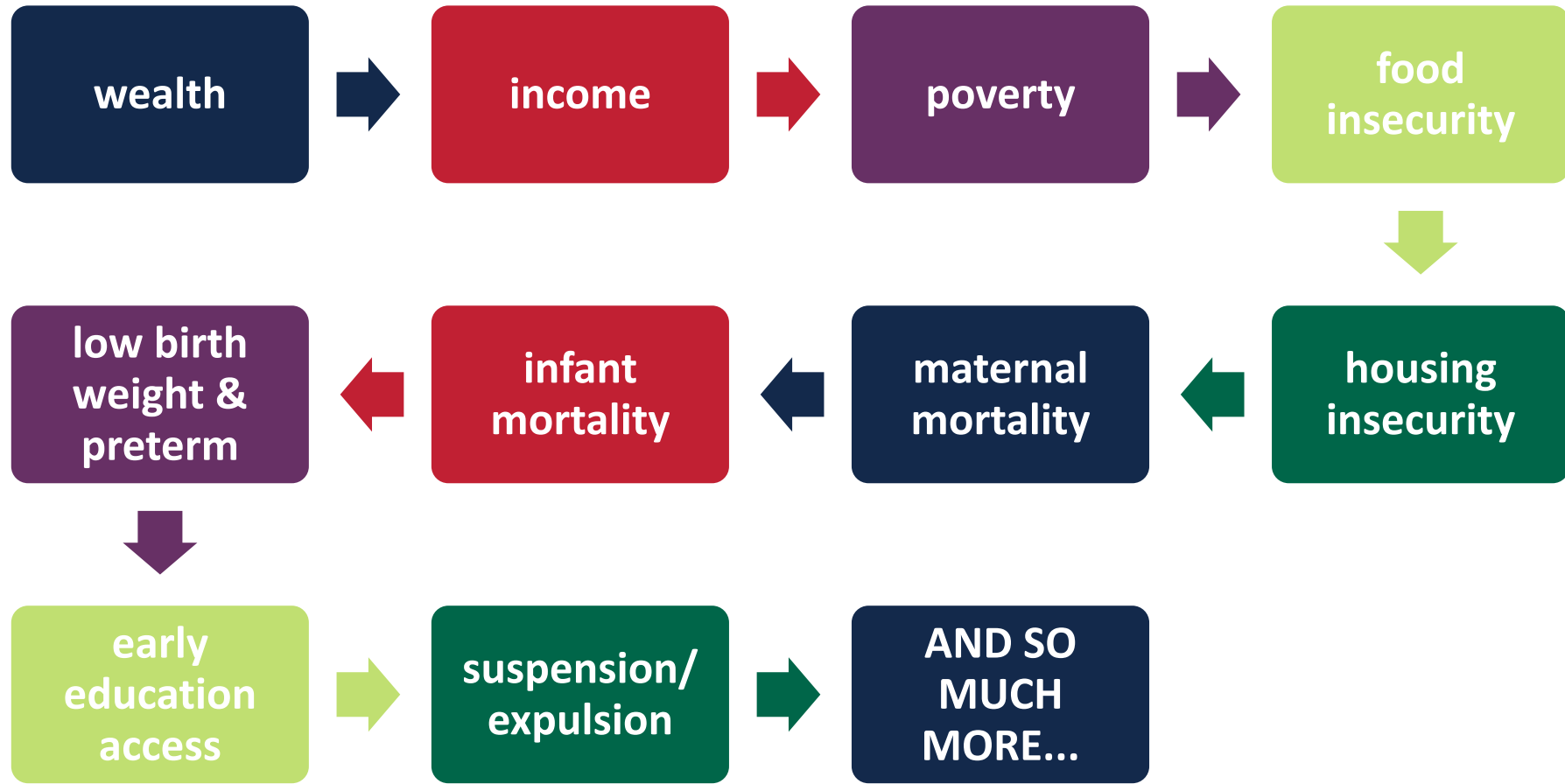
^a Based on those who reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for basic needs.



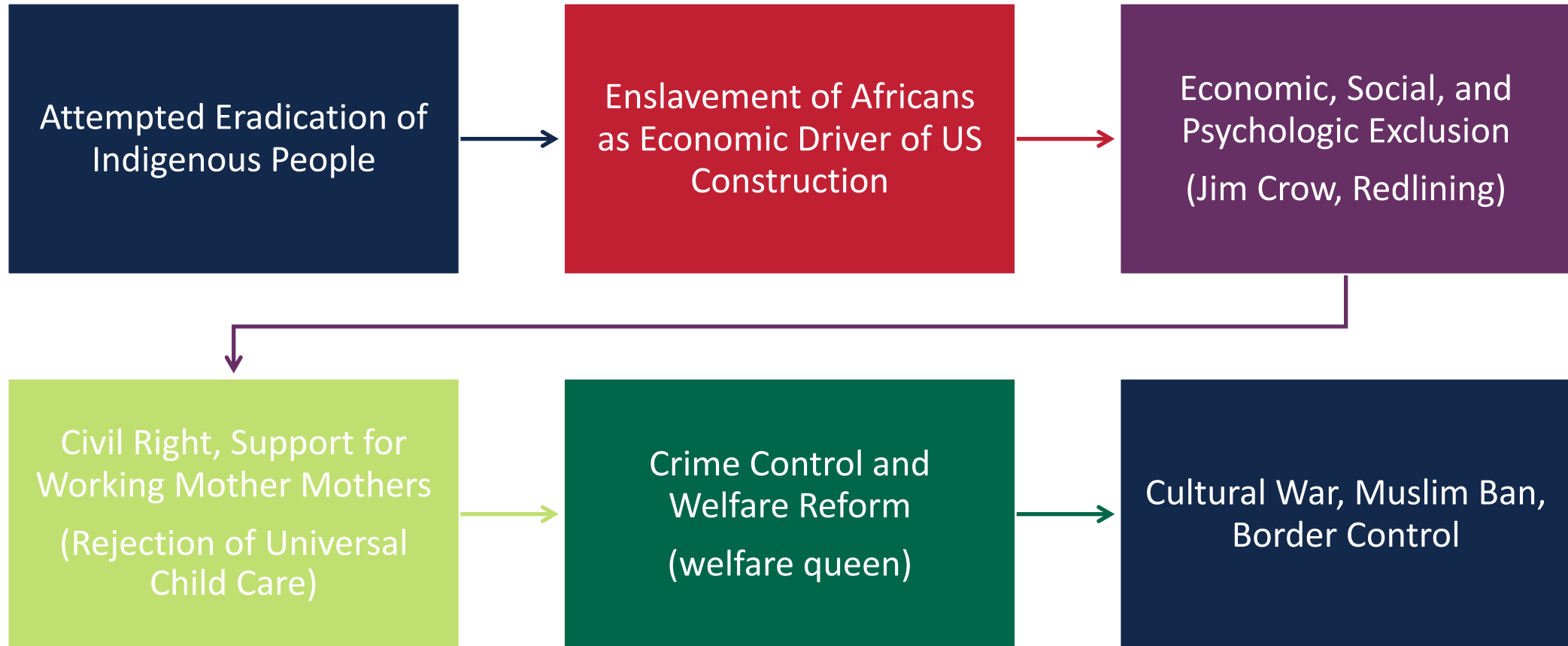
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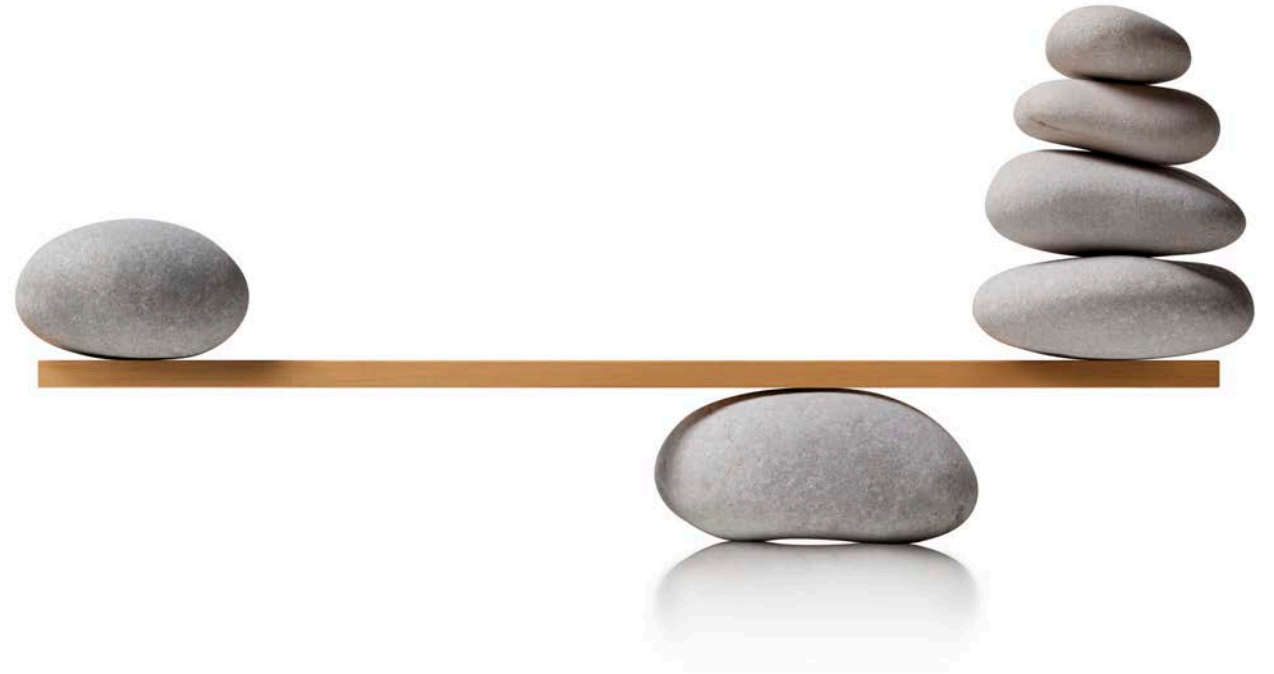
Children who are experiencing homelessness are likely experiencing other adversities.



Disparities are rooted in our systems and policies. Not an accident that Black children likely to experience homelessness.



An Opportunity Presented: Global Pandemic and Racial Justice



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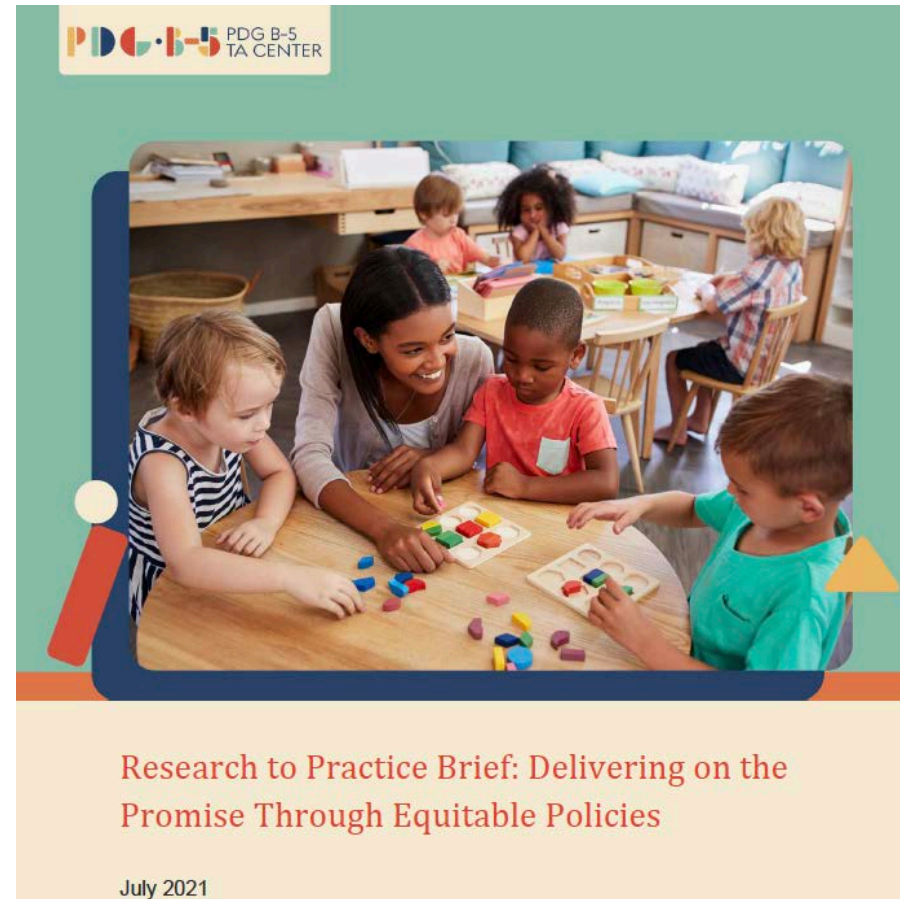
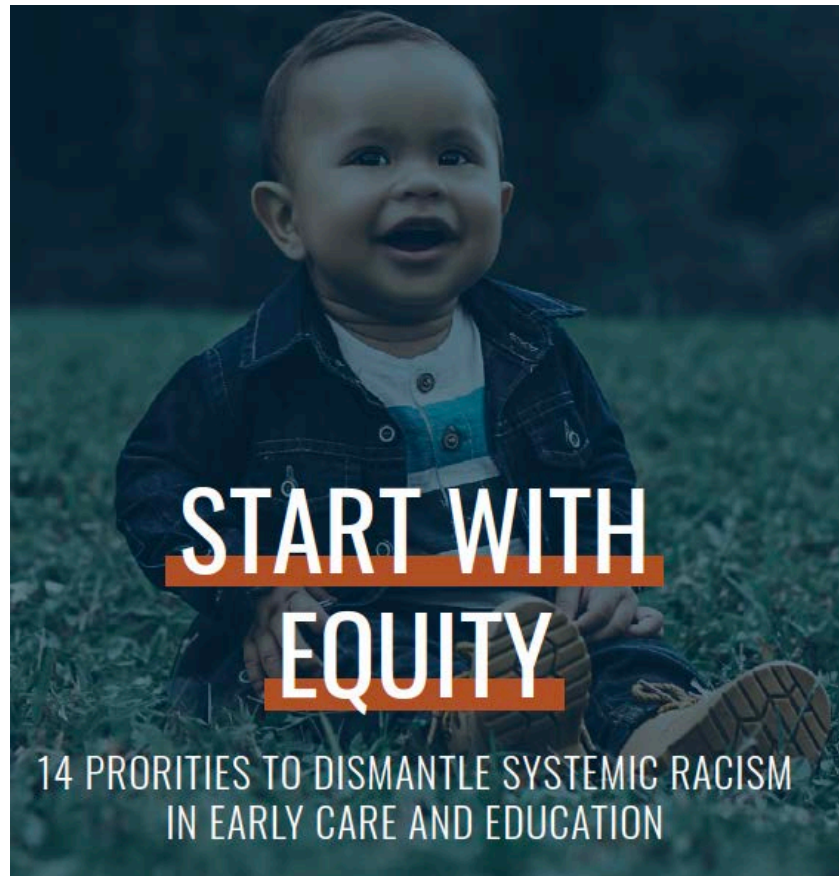
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Seeing children and families beyond their homelessness

Dismantle Systemic Inequities in the Early Years



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**CHILDREN'S EQUITY
PROJECT**

Dismantling Racism and Address Inequities

HEALTHY CHILD & FAMILY SUPPORTS

- Health Insurance
- **SNAP, Housing**
- Preconception & prenatal care
- Home Visiting Supports

ECONOMIC STABILITY & UPWARD MOBILITY

- Paid Family Leave
- **Income Supports**
- Tax credits
- Minimum Wage



Are Black and Latine Families with Babies Feeling Relief from the Child Tax Credit?

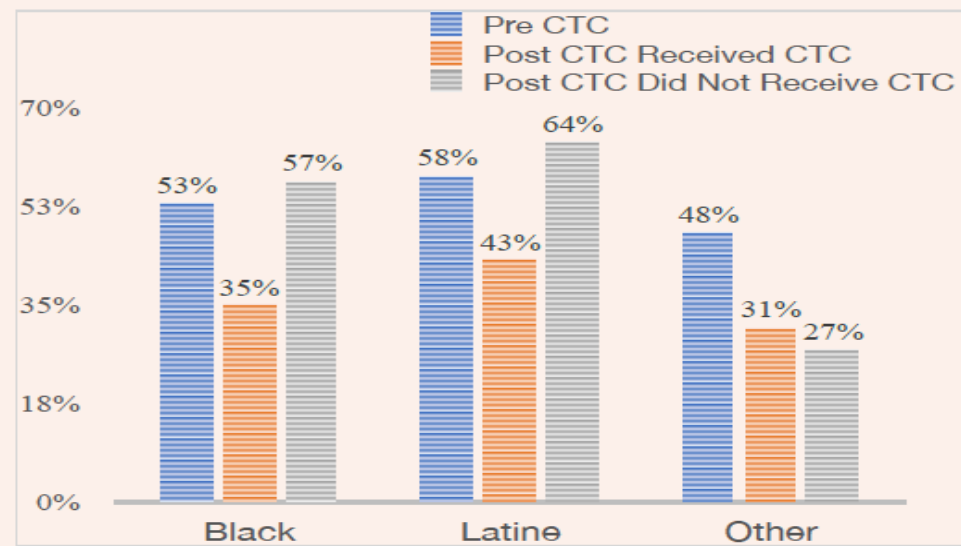
Equity Coalition Rescue Plan Microbrief Series 21-001 | October 2021

By Iheoma U. Iruka^a, Jacqueline Sims^b, Dharini Bathia^a, and Milton Suggs^a

^aUniversity of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

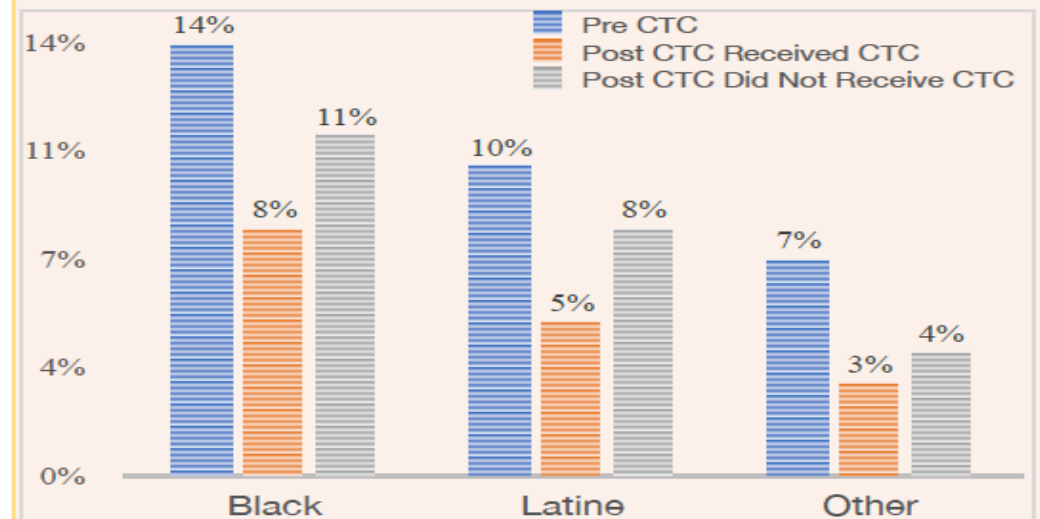
^bBoston University

Figure 1. Income Instability Before and After Receipt of a Child Tax Credit, By Race/Ethnicity and Receipt Status



Note. Percent of parents who reported their income decreased prior to and after the first installment of child tax credits.

Figure 2. Major Financial Problems Before and After Receipt of a Child Tax Credit, By Race/Ethnicity and Receipt Status



Note. Percent of parents who reported major financial problems prior to and after the first installment of child tax credits.



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<https://fpg.unc.edu/projects/american-rescue-plan-are-families-color-feeling-relief-0>

Dismantling Racism and Address Inequities

ECE ACCESS

- Equitable Funding
- Authentic Integration
- Center FCCH & FFN
- Equity in EI/SPED ID

ECE EXPERIENCES

- Workforce Equity
- Equity in Workforce Prep & Dev
- Equity in QRIS/QI
- Equity in Global Quality Assessments
- Eliminate Harsh Discipline
- Equitable Access/Expansion to DLL
- Family Leadership
- Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy

ECE OUTCOMES

- Equity in Monitoring & Accountability
- Equity in CQI





Where do we go from here?



Equity Research Action Coalition

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

BE RICHER!

- ☐ **R**e-educate about history
- ☐ **I**ntegrate rather than just desegregate
- ☐ **C**ritique everything
- ☐ **H**umility of privilege
- ☐ **E**rase racism
- ☐ **R**e-vision different ways, approaches, theories, data, teams, measures...



Our country will be **enriched** by limiting the dehumanization of people and eradication of racism and bias in all aspects of our world, including programming, policy, & research.





Take home message

- Addressing homelessness must be **holistic**.
- Homelessness is **one of the symptoms** of racism and systemic inequities.
- We must address healthy supports, economic mobility, and ECE **access, experiences, and outcomes**.
- We must engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R. actions** through our self-inquiry and collective networks to combat racism.



Equity Research Action Coalition

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK AND VOICE!!

Thank You for Being Here!

Comments??
Questions??

<https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu>



Equity Research Action Coalition

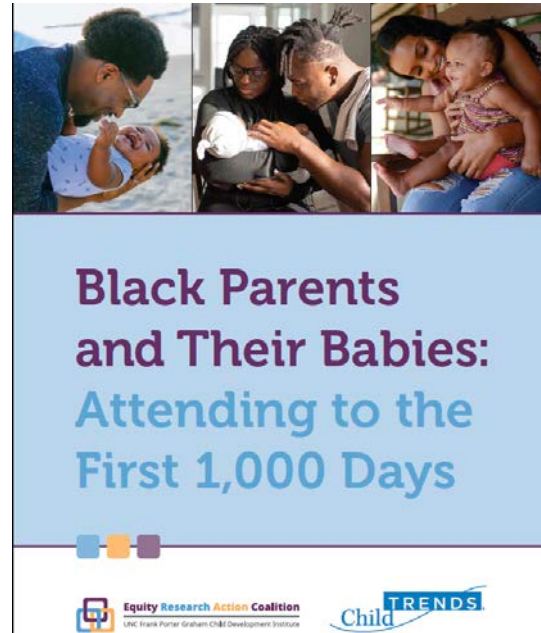
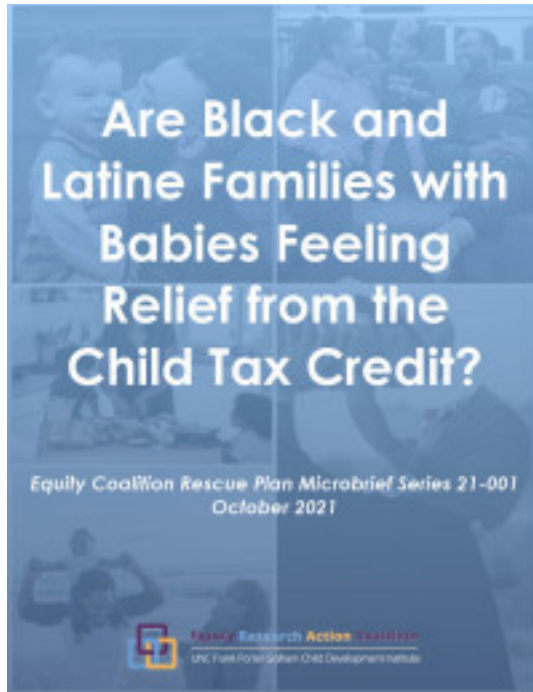
UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute



Iheoma U. Iruka

Twitter: @IheomaIruka

Resources



Resources

- Iruka, I. U., Oliva-Olson, C., & Garcia, E., (2021) *Research to practice brief: Delivering on the promise through equitable policies*. SRI International.
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/pdgb5ta_equitablepractices_rtp_acc.pdf
- Iruka, I. U., Sims, J., & Forte, A. (2021). *Black parents and their babies: Attending to the first 1,000 days*. Chapel Hill, NC: Equity Research Action Coalition at the UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. <https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu/resource/black-parents-and-their-babies-attending-to-the-first-1000-days/>
- Iruka, I. U., Sims, J., Suggs, M., & Bathia, D. (October 2021). *Are Black and Latine Families with Babies Feeling Relief from the Child Tax Credit?* Equity Coalition Rescue Plan Microbrief Series 21-001. Chapel Hill, NC: Equity Research Action Coalition, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu/resource/are-black-and-latine-families-with-babies-feeling-relief-from-the-child-tax-credit/>
- Meek, S., Iruka, I. U., Allen, R., Yazzie, D. A., Fernandez, V., Catherine, E., McIntosh, K., Gordon, L., Gilliam, W., Hemmeter, M. L., Blevins, D., & Powell, T. (December 2020). *Start With Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education*. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, The Children's Equity Project. <https://fpg.unc.edu/publications/start-equity-14-priorities-dismantle-systemic-racism-early-care-and-education>
- Radcliff, E., Crouch, E., Strompolis, M., & Srivastav, A. (2019). Homelessness in Childhood and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 23(6), 811-820. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-018-02698-w>



Panelists



Maria G. Velasco



Tasha Melvin



Byron McIntyre



Joy Henderson



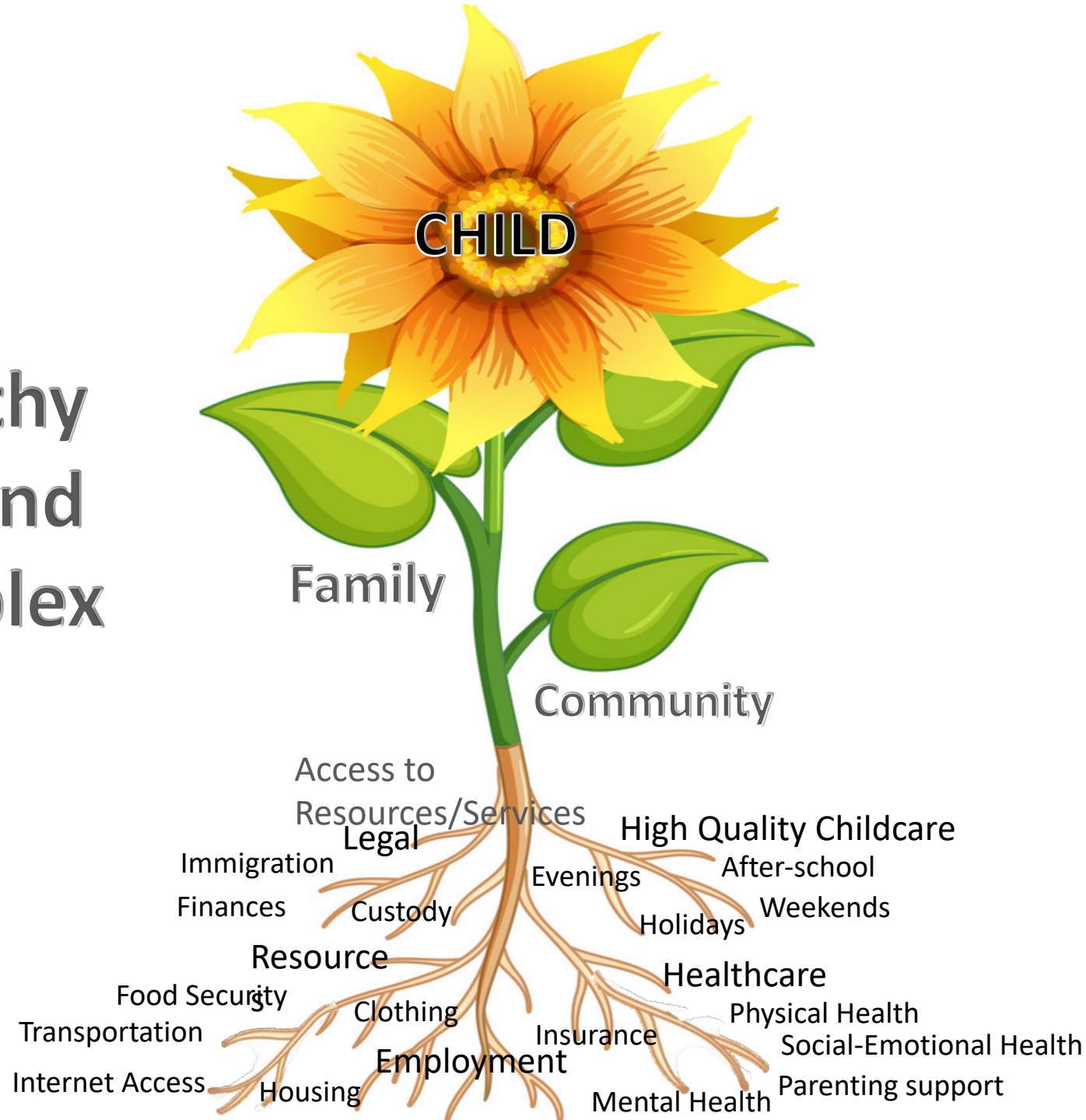
Alma Davis

Maria Velasco

Lead Parent Consultant

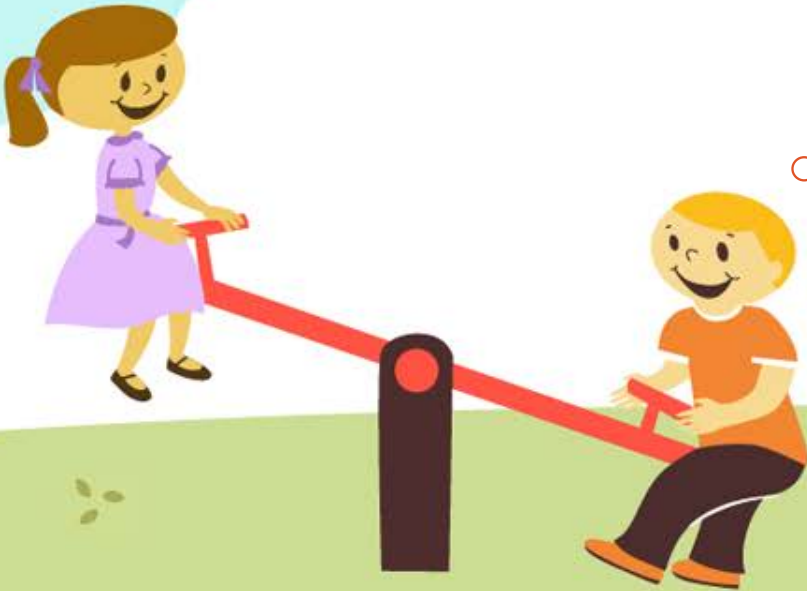


The formula for healthy
and happy children and
families = many complex
factors!



Family Voices Project

- Data originally collected as part of a larger project by the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation
- 47 interviews with caregivers about families' views of social emotional health programs and services



"I noticed that it all starts with me. Everything that I do, he watches me."

"Services seem to be stepping up for the black community and Hispanic community."

"Parenting groups. I loved the workshops at the shelter!"

"It matters to me that I know that the person helping me really wants to support me. It helps me to have that reassurance that you're going to help me to your best ability and not just brush me off."

"Being in a program made me more open to receiving help. It made me be more open to life and just knowing that I'm not the only one who is alone in it."

What is going well...



Recommendations/Wishes

“Transportation to high quality daycare centers.”

“More people willing to put themselves out there to care for these kids the way that they need to. Not just for a paycheck but for their heart.”

“They have a lot of teen centers and stuff but it is important to have places for young kids to go and be safe. More centers and space for the younger kids.”

“Free child care. Birth-15 years old.”



My Vision

- Family **access** to resources (education, etc.) **without delay**
- **Customize** by family needs
- Programs should recognize **strengths** of children
- Recognition that **every family is different!**



"{Housing provider} is a great resource, but I just hate the turnover. We have seen so many caseworkers...I have to retell my story over and over to three different people. I haven't seen good outcomes yet because I go from social worker to different programs and it gets kinda agitating that we can't get things accomplished."

"I would like for him to be at a daycare that did a better job supporting his social emotional development but I had to go with one that offered transportation."

"I am an African American woman and there are a lot of things that are misunderstood about us and the way we raise our kids. We can't afford a lot of things for our kids like clubs and stuff. Race is a big problem."

"So trying to move out of here and find housing has been hard, because they want you to be homeless and living in the woods to help."

"After School Programs...We have trouble affording them."

Barriers

- Staff turnover
- Misunderstandings about race/ ethnicity/ culture/ background
- Eligibility
- Affordability
- Transportation



Telamon North Carolina Head Start/Early Head Start Program

Serving: Caswell, Chatham, Sampson, and Wake Counties

Presenter: Byron McIntyre, Program Coordinator





About Telamon Corporation

Telamon Corporation was established in 1965.

Telamon Corporation has a rich history working tirelessly to serve those in need. Over the years, our nonprofit has grown to include over 2,000 employees, board members, volunteers and partners – all actively involved in helping to make communities better, individually and collectively.

Services Provided to Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Telamon North Carolina prioritizes enrollment for children and families experiencing homelessness during the selection process.

Selection is based on a point system and children who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act receives the highest number of points.

Services Provided to Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Once enrolled, families are oriented on the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA)

The FPA is an introduction to the services our program provides.

Examples of services provided: *Parent Trainings, Family Needs Assessments, Development of Family Goals, Referrals to Community Agencies.*

Families can agree to partner with us or if they are working with another agency, they continue the support there to avoid duplication of services.

Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

Alma Davis

Consultant with Partners for Impact

Joy Henderson

Shelter Coordinator with Helpmate



Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness -- A Pilot Project

CCSA and Partners for Impact are collaborating to provide assistance to shelters completing the ***Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Shelters*** and to connect them with early childhood programs, in support of young children and families experiencing homelessness.



Project Goals

- To make the validated ***Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Shelters*** accessible to shelters across the United States.
- To support community building and collaboration between early childhood and housing/homelessness practitioners.
- To strengthen and enhance environments to create child-friendly spaces for young children and families in shelters.
- Enroll children who are experiencing homelessness in high quality early care and education programs.



**We are helping shelters shift
from supporting families with children
to
supporting families AND children**



Project Activities



- Provide training & technical assistance to shelters & transitional housing programs serving families with children ages 0-5.
- Use the ***Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Shelters*** to help shelters create environments that promote the development of young children.
- Encourage shelters and local early childhood programs to collaborate so that children can enroll in high quality early care and education.



Did you know?

- Homelessness is a reality for many families with young children in the United States. In 2018, about a third of all people who stayed in a shelter were families with children, and nearly half of children served by HUD -funded emergency and transitional housing providers were age five or younger (HUD, 2019).
- Moreover, in 2017–2018, more than 1.4 million young children from birth through age five were reported as served by the early childhood and homeless education programs administered by ED and HHS.



Helpmate

- What have you learned from the Assessment?
- How has the Assessment helped Helpmate?



Families Moving Forward™

Helping families in the crisis of homelessness find their way home by providing temporary housing, case management, skills education, and connection to community resources to help parents and children thrive in stable homes.

Every family thriving in a safe, stable home.



Unique 3-tiered approach

The NEST - Emergency shelter w/ case management support

Programming - Tailored to support self-sufficiency and child development

Branching Out - 18 months of aftercare case management and programming



FMF's Children's Support & Services



Children's Services at FMF

**Academic
Support**



**Physical and
Emotional Health**



**Parent-Child
Relationship**



Academic Support

Age 0-5:

- Early childhood vouchers
- Early intervention assessments (ASQ + ASQSE + DRDP)
- Referrals to CDSA and Public School System
- Guided free play in structured environment led by teacher
- Connections within community (e.g. Dolly Parton books, EHS)



Physical and Emotional Health



Physical Health

- Playground at FMF
- FMF Community Garden
- Baynes Family Farm

Emotional Health

- Sesame St curriculum (free!!)
- Family counselor onsite and referrals to outside providers
- Onsite playroom interactions provide social/emotional health



Parent-Child Relationships

- Parenting classes
- Attachment and Biobehavioral Catchup (ABC)
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Parent-Child Activities (museum membership, art projects, sport and/or theater event attendance)
- Advocacy (EIP/504 Plan meetings)
- Connecting parents with resources (therapies, camps, extra-curricular)



Good news for NC families!

- Early Childhood Action Plan: Goal 4 to decrease homelessness
- Recommendations to improve collection of data on young children experiencing homelessness
- NC Homeless Education Program will add new staff member focusing on early childhood.





National
Perspective:
Barbara Duffield

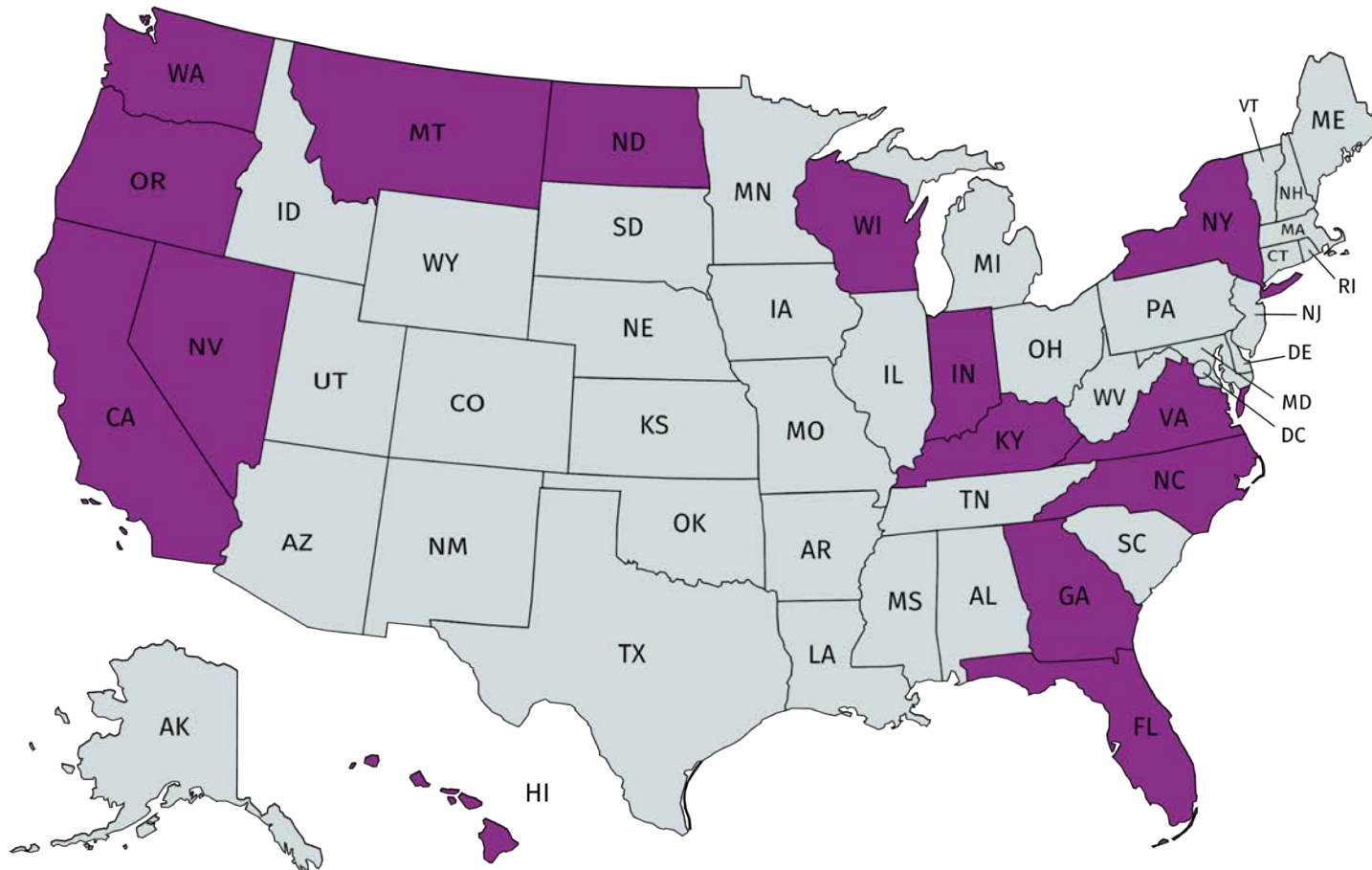
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website:
<http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>
- Newsletter:
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/>
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships



Education Leads Home



Three Bold Goals:

- **Young children will participate in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as their housed peers by 2026.**
- **High school students will reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2030.**
- **Postsecondary students will reach a 60 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2034.**



Head Start Referral App for Children Experiencing Homelessness



The Building Back Better Act and Early Childhood Homelessness - Child Care



- Establishes a new “Birth Through Five Child Care and Early Learning Entitlement” to provide direct child care services for low and lower-income children who are under age six, and not yet enrolled in kindergarten.
- Children experiencing homelessness (as defined by the McKinney-Vento education definition of homelessness), or in foster care or kinship care, are categorically eligible. **Their parents would not be subject to work, education, or job training requirements.**
- **Families with incomes less than 75% of the State median income would not pay any copayments for child care,** and families whose income is between 75-100% of state median income would pay no more than 2% of their income as copayment.
- States would be required to **use a portion of their quality child care funding to improve access** for children experiencing homelessness and children who are in foster care.

The Building Back Better Act and Early Childhood Homelessness - Preschool



- Sets up a six-year universal preschool program (and provides funding for the first three years) for three and four year-old children, to be administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the US Department of Education.
- Includes licensed child care programs, local educational agencies, and Head Start programs as eligible grantees.
- Requires **local grantees to adopt policies and practices to conduct outreach and provide expedited enrollment and prioritization for children experiencing homelessness (as defined by the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act)**, children in foster care, children with disabilities, dual language learners, and children in families that participate in migrant or seasonal agricultural labor.
- Requires States to assure that **age-appropriate transportation services are provided, at a minimum for children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.**

The Building Back Better Act and Early Childhood Homelessness - Housing



- Provides \$25 billion in rental assistance. Of this funding:
 - \$7.2 billion is provided for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking
 - \$300 million is provided for competitive grants for mobility-related services
 - \$230 million is provided for landlord incentives to participate in the program
- Public Housing
 - \$65 billion to preserve public affordable housing infrastructure.
- National Housing Trust Fund
 - \$15 billion for activities to support the preservation and creation of new rental homes affordable to the lowest income households.

Early Childhood Homelessness Resources

1. [SchoolHouse Connection's Early Childhood Resources Page](#)
2. [Head Start Early Learning and Knowledge Center's Modules on Homelessness](#)
3. [Head Start Decision-Making Tool to Determine a Family's Homeless Situation](#)
4. [Supporting Young Children & Families Experiencing Homelessness with American Rescue Plan Act Funds](#)

We want to hear from you!

1. What would be the impact in your community if every caregiver experiencing homelessness had affordable, accessible high-quality childcare that fully met their needs?

2. What should the state of NC (Governor, DHHS, DCDEE) do to support young children experiencing homelessness?

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/13-U7KCRINGdfS3tvrnRTnAN8mQxtSpRCr62cxjTGioM/viewer?f=0>

or in the chat box

A large orange circle with a white outline, partially visible on the left side of the slide.

THANK YOU!

Next Steps:

- Brief survey to provide feedback and direction for our work – link in chat and will be sent via email – **drawing for \$25 gift card** *thank you in advance!*
- Join Yay Babies!
(mary_haskett@ncsu.edu)