



Homeless Young Children: Research Summary

Homeless infants and toddlers are much more likely than other children to exhibit developmental delays due to the turbulence in their lives associated with unstable and unsafe housing, high rates of domestic violence in their families, poverty, hunger, and inadequate access to services necessary to avert developmental delays.

According to a recent study, half (54%) of homeless preschoolers had a major developmental delay (language, gross motor, fine motor, social), and delays in more than one area (Child Trends, February 2012).

Health

- Homeless children are more likely to have moderate to severe acute and chronic health problems, such as asthma, but to have less access to care (Child Trends, February 2012).
- Homeless children have twice as many ear infections, four times the rate of asthma, and five times more diarrhea and stomach problems (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).
- Homeless children go hungry twice as often as non-homeless children (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).

Emotional/Behavioral

- Half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal compared to 18 percent of non-homeless children (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).
- By the time homeless children are eight years old, one in three has a major mental disorder (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).
- Homeless children have high rates of externalizing behaviors (conduct disorder, hostility) (Child Trends, February 2012).
- **More than one-fifth of homeless preschoolers have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care, but less than one-third receive any treatment (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).**

Education

- Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade, be expelled or suspended, or drop out of school (Child Trends, February 2012).
- Homeless children have significantly poorer academic outcomes (lower IQ scores, below grade performance) (Child Trends, February 2012).
- Homeless children have twice the rate of learning disabilities compared to non-homeless children (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).
- Little data are available regarding the participation of homeless children in programs, but when tracked, their rates of participation in preschool (including Head Start) are low (Child Trends, February 2012).