

Noted experts speak out about the issues surrounding child poverty in the US

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One in five children in the U.S. lives below the federal poverty level (FPL) and nearly half of children in America are classified as poor or near poor. Childhood poverty creates long-lasting, often permanent, physiologic changes through constant exposure to threats such as malnutrition, acute and chronic disease, toxic stress, social deprivation, and lack of opportunity. Because poor children and families are generally forced to cluster in specific neighborhoods, these changes also produce the higher crime rates, lower education levels, worse job prospects, and vicious cycles of intergenerational poverty that destroy entire communities. In order to contextualize the problem and propose possible solutions, a new supplement to *Academic Pediatrics* is entirely devoted to examining child poverty in America.

This *Academic Pediatrics* supplement provides in-depth insights and is part of a strategic plan to increase awareness and education. "This is a state-of-the-art compilation on the entire scope of [childhood poverty](#) in the U.S.," explained Peter Szilagyi, MD, MPH, Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA, and Editor-in-Chief of *Academic Pediatrics*. "We hope it will inform the response of pediatricians, educators, advocates, and policy makers to this critical issue facing children and our country today."

Bringing together groundbreaking work by leading pediatric researchers, child advocates, social scientists, economists, and public health experts, the supplement focuses on four primary areas:

- **Child Poverty: An Attack on Our Nation's Human Capital** addresses how [child poverty](#) affects cognitive growth and negatively influences health outcomes, with an emphasis on the mechanisms that attack children early on and stay with them through adulthood.
- **Who Is Poor: The Definition and Measurement of Poverty** focuses on what it means to be poor, examines the statistics and methodology used in classifying [poverty](#), and looks at how issues of poverty extend even to children and families living above the [federal poverty level](#).
- **International Child Poverty Levels and Interventions: A Comparison to the U.S.** examines America's place among the developed nations of the world and the effectiveness of programs and interventions used abroad to combat child poverty.
- **Child Poverty Interventions in the U.S.: Reducing Child Poverty and Ameliorating the Impact of Poverty on Child Health and Well-being** looks at what the U.S. is currently doing to reduce child poverty and to lower its impact on adverse physical and mental health outcomes.

Ultimately the authors who have contributed to the supplement hope that the information it contains will help doctors, public health officials, and policy leaders at local, state, and national levels better understand all the facets of childhood poverty, enabling them to more efficiently tackle the problem.

"Children remain the poorest members of our society even in good times, with rates that are unacceptably high for a developed nation," stated guest editor Benard Dreyer, MD, Department of Pediatrics, Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics, NYU School of Medicine, Bellevue Hospital Center. "We hope that this synthesis will empower pediatricians and other pediatric health providers, local and national leaders who are striving to improve the lives and outcomes of children

and families, and policy-makers and change-agents to use your agency and activism to address this critical issue."

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