



RESEARCH ON HOUSING & HEALTH

High-quality, stable and affordable housing supports family health and well-being and is critical for building sustainable communities.

Stable and Affordable Housing Supports Mental Health and Well-Being

- **Having access to affordable, stable, high-quality housing is associated with lower stress levels and lower incidence of anxiety and depression.**
- Stable housing helps promote higher self-esteem among parents and can lead to better prospects for family self-sufficiency.
- Living close to work reduces commute time—and the related stress—and creates more time for exercise and family.

High-Quality Housing is Important to Ensure Physical Health and Safety

- **When individuals and households struggle to afford housing they may accept substandard or otherwise inappropriate housing in order to afford housing at all. Others, in an attempt to secure housing or higher quality housing may accept cost burdens that threaten household stability.**
- Quality housing reduces lead exposure, which is particularly harmful for young children. Children with elevated lead levels have poorer school performance, attention and behavioral problems, and experience higher rates of juvenile delinquency.
- Rates of childhood asthma and bronchitis are highest for those living in homes with allergens and poor ventilation.
- Families living in substandard homes move more often than others. Children who have moved two or more times in a year generally have lower bodyweight than those who have not moved homes.
- Children who experienced homelessness before and after birth are more likely to be hospitalized during childhood.

The Whole Community Benefits When Families Have Better Health

- **The costs of poor health associated with a lack of affordable, appropriate and stable housing have negative social and economic impacts.**
 - Higher health costs associated with substandard and inadequate housing are often borne by the public sector through public health expenditures.
 - Non-medical costs associated with poor health outcomes, including lost school and workdays, lost parental and lifetime wages, and premature death also negatively affect the community.
- Poor employee health affects businesses. Employers may experience higher rates of turnover that results in unfilled positions, lower productivity, and lost profits, as well as losing knowledge and skills.

Research summaries compiled by Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech in consultation with Lisa Sturtevant & Associates, LLC for the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development. Research references and citations available upon request at rha@fairfaxcounty.gov.