

AFFORDABLE HOUSING BENEFITS HEALTH

Housing has long been recognized as an important social determinant of health, which the COVID-19 pandemic has made even more apparent. Lower-income households typically spend a greater percent of their income on housing, leaving less money for preventative medical care, prescription medications and nutritious foods. Meanwhile, these same households are more likely to face unsafe living conditions, increased mental health stressors and eviction or foreclosure, all of which increase the likelihood of long-term physical and mental health problems.



Lowers exposure to health threats



Improves mental health



Reduces health care spending



Reduces risk of COVID-19 exposure



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J. Adam Abram, Chair
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Affordable housing [reduces exposure to health problems](#) often associated with older, poorly-maintained housing such as allergens, neurotoxins lead-based paint, mold and rodents. These hazards can lead to asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Poor housing conditions have long been linked to infectious disease spread, including most recently COVID-19 cases. [One study](#) found a 5% increase of households living in poor housing conditions is related to a 50% higher risk of COVID-19 within a community.



Access to stable, affordable supportive housing reduces use of emergency health care services and lowers associated costs. [One study](#) found that permanent supportive housing is associated with a 38% reduction in emergency room visits and almost 67% fewer days in emergency shelters compared to other chronically homeless individuals. People with access to affordable housing experience a [12% reduction](#) in Medicaid costs through decreased visits to emergency departments and increased utilization of preventative primary care.



The impacts of eviction, forced relocation, or homelessness can last for years and are particularly detrimental for children. Individuals who experience an eviction are more likely to report poor physical and mental health, [even 8 years](#) after the eviction occurred. Affordable housing increases housing stability and reduces stressors associated with frequent moves or evictions, increasing the overall physical and mental health of its residents, particularly children. Children living in affordable housing are less [likely to miss class](#) and have a better chance of completing their education.



Economic strain related to COVID-19 has placed [millions of households](#) on the verge of eviction and foreclosure. Studies find evictions and housing instability create increased opportunity for COVID-19 transmission due to overcrowded housing, homelessness and increased transiency, all of which make it harder to social distance, quarantine and maintain proper hygiene.