

## *Guest Editors' Introduction*

# **The Health-Housing Nexus: New Answers to Key Questions**

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The link between housing and health is far reaching and complex. Historically, the housing-health nexus has been primarily associated with physical exposures and dilapidated housing; however, recent studies suggest that adverse health outcomes are also linked to housing rental assistance status, housing insecurity, a lack of affordable housing, and neighborhood quality.

Substandard, unaffordable housing and stalled community development represent important public health challenges facing millions of American families, and disentangling the complex relationships between housing and health is crucial for policymakers. This Cityscape symposium adds to the current body of evidence highlighting the relationship between health and housing. Throughout this issue, the authors examine innovative approaches to addressing cross-sector policies and programs that promote the utilization of housing as a platform to improve quality of life.

The following 10 articles begin to answer key questions pertinent to housing and health. The first three articles examine the health impact of interventions targeting specific aspects of housing. The next three articles highlight state and local efforts designed to bridge the divide between housing and health. The last four articles provide new qualitative and quantitative evidence exploring the link between housing and health. Specifically, the articles explore the following topics and questions.

## Evaluations of the Health Impact of Housing-Based Interventions

1. **Does providing supportive services in housing developments reduce Medicare spending?** Kandilov et al. (2018) used Medicare claims data and a difference-in-difference study design to investigate Vermont's Supportive and Services at Home program. They found that, although the program was not associated with lower healthcare spending overall, Medicare expenditures declined in a subset of developments.
2. **Does the placement of community health workers in assisted housing developments promote positive health outcomes?** By studying the implementation of community health workers in two subsidized housing developments, Freeman et al. (2018) found that a large majority of residents reported meeting their goals, expressed improved overall well-being, and stated satisfaction with the program.
3. **Can work requirements promote self-sufficiency? What are the health consequences of these requirements?** Using a mixed-methods approach, Frescoln et al. (2018) explored the use of work requirements in public housing and its impact on residents' overall well-being. The authors suggest that, when work requirements are implemented alongside case management, these initiatives can increase residents' employment, albeit with potential negative impacts on receipt of food assistance and Medicaid enrollment.

## State and Local Efforts To Bridge the Divide Between Housing and Health

4. **How do state and local housing programs address the relationship between housing assistance and health?** Bailey, Bailey, and Rice (2018) provided an indepth analysis regarding the development of 19 state- and locally funded rental assistance programs in two cities and eight states, showing how these programs promote housing affordability and address the complex housing and health relationship.
5. **How can housing developers incorporate public health throughout the design process?** De Scisciolo, Egger, and Ayala (2018) detailed a pilot study in which five community development corporations partnered with public health professionals to create Health Action Plans. Results indicate the potential for these plans to help prioritize health in the development process.
6. **To what extent are public housing authorities currently partnering to support the health and well-being of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-assisted individuals and families?** Through a survey of housing authorities, Lucas (2018) explored how large public housing authorities promote resident and community health for assisted tenants. Housing authorities reported high engagement with public health entities and community-based social and human service providers, but housing authorities also reported limitations in funding, staffing, and data sharing.

## New Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence Examining the Link Between Housing and Health

7. **What are the mechanisms through which subsidized housing might impact chronic disease management?** Using qualitative interview data to examine the transition into assisted housing, Keene et al. (2018) found that receipt of rental assistance was accompanied by improvements in diabetes self-management.
8. **How does homelessness during infancy impact maternal and child health?** Cutts et al. (2018) found that homelessness during infancy is a risk for adverse infant and maternal health and hardship. The authors identified that homelessness during infancy was significantly associated with higher developmental risk and, for mothers, worse overall health and depressive symptoms.
9. **Does receipt of housing assistance impact health behaviors?** Through the analysis of panel survey data, Antonakos and Colabianchi (2018) found that moving to assisted housing was linked with higher rates of smoking initially but not at long-term followup. No association was observed for several other health behaviors.
10. **How does housing vacancy impact population health?** Wang and Immergluck (2018) observed that higher numbers of vacant homes is significantly associated with adverse health outcomes in the neighborhood. This link between housing vacancy and neighborhood health varied according to whether the metropolitan area was experiencing strong or weak growth.

We hope that the research presented in this symposium will stimulate innovative ideas about how the housing and health sectors can partner at the national, state, and local levels to promote secure housing and foster individual and population health.

### Guest Editors

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