



## Building Stronger Communities for Better Health: Moving from Science to Policy and Practice

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## Neighborhood Factors Influence Health Through:

- Direct effects on both physical and mental health
- Indirect influences on behaviors that have health consequences
- Health impacts resulting from the quality and availability of health care
- Health impacts associated with the availability of opportunity structures (e.g., access to healthy food, safe spaces, capital, transportation)

## What We Know (IOM & NAS, HHS, WHO)

- Neighborhood, school and family environments matter for child health and development.
- Children are highly segregated across neighborhoods and schools
- Segregation is associated with poor cognitive, health, and life outcomes
- Racial and ethnic inequalities in children's access to "opportunity neighborhoods" and "opportunity schools" are associated with racial/ethnic segregation, and can't be accounted for by income differences

## Negative Effects of Segregation on Health and Human Development

- Racial segregation *concentrates poverty* and excludes and isolates communities of color from the mainstream resources needed for success. African Americans are more likely to reside in poorer neighborhoods regardless of income level.
- Segregation also *restricts socio-economic opportunity* by channeling non-whites into neighborhoods with poorer public schools, fewer employment opportunities, and smaller returns on real estate.

## Negative Effects of Segregation on Health and Human Development (cont'd)

- African Americans are *five times less likely* than whites to live in census tracts with supermarkets, and are *more likely* to live in communities with a high percentage of fast-food outlets, liquor stores and convenience stores
- Black and Latino neighborhoods also have *fewer parks and green spaces* than white neighborhoods, and *fewer safe places* to walk, jog, bike or play, including fewer gyms, recreational centers and swimming pools

## Negative Effects of Segregation on Health and Human Development (cont'd)

- Low-income communities and communities of color are *more likely to be exposed* to environmental hazards. For example, 56% of residents in neighborhoods with commercial hazardous waste facilities are people of color even though they comprise less than 30% of the U.S. population
- The "Poverty Tax:" Residents of poor communities *pay more for the exact same consumer products* than those in higher income neighborhoods-- more for auto loans, furniture, appliances, bank fees, and even groceries



## Moving from Science to Practice – The Joint Center PLACE MATTERS Initiative

Progress to Date—PLACE MATTERS teams are:

- Identifying key social determinants and health outcomes that must be addressed at community levels
- Building multi-sector alliances
- Engaging policymakers and other key stakeholders
- Evaluating practices

## Moving from Science to Practice – The Joint Center PLACE MATTERS Initiative

PLACE MATTERS teams have implemented an array of strategies to improve community conditions for health:

- Bernalillo County – analyzing land use policies to address the disproportionate burden of environmental pollutants on minority and vulnerable communities, raising awareness of the cumulative impact of multiple environmental and social stressors on the health of the community.
- King County (WA) – educating and mobilizing community leaders to engage in discussions about racism, discrimination, and privilege to raise awareness about their relationships to health inequity, and to build support for a robust policy agenda developed through a collaborative stakeholder engagement process.
- San Joaquin Valley – seeks to reduce motor vehicle injury and fatalities by raising public and policymaker awareness of inadequacies in the area's transportation infrastructure, particularly in low-income migrant worker communities.

"[I]nequities in health [and] avoidable health inequalities arise because of the circumstances in which people grow, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. The conditions in which people live and die are, in turn, shaped by political, social, and economic forces."

World Health Organization Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (2008)