BUILDING EARLY LINKS FOR LEARNING: PROTECTING EARLY DEVELOPMENT

JANETTE E. HERBERS AND J. J. CUTULI
OVERVIEW

- Family homelessness and young children
- Homelessness as risk
- Resilience and protective factors
- Main goals of BELL

Photo Source: CURA Reporter, 38(2), 3-12.
Most children in Philadelphia Emergency Housing are under age 6

- ~2,500 children (60% of all children) each year

- Served by 21 programs funded in the city
  - Emergency housing
  - Transitional programs
  - Facility based
  - Scattered site

Map from Cutuli & Carvalho Pereira, 2016
HOMELESSNESS: ACUTE AND CHRONIC RISKS

CHRONIC:

- Extreme poverty
- Challenges for parents
  - Limited educational backgrounds
  - Unemployment
  - Disability, mental illness
- Lack of social support
- History of stressful events/trauma
- Residential instability

ACUTE:

- Loss of housing, possessions
-Disconnected from family, friends, community
- Domestic violence or other serious relationship problems
- Ongoing stress or trauma
- Crowded living spaces
- Shelter settings/institutional living
EARLY AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Gender
Ethnicity
Poverty
Birth Risks
Maltreatment

Attendance 2nd grade

HOMELESSNESS

Perlman & Fantuzzo, 2010
EARLY AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Gender
Ethnicity
Poverty
Birth Risks
Maltreatment

Academic Achievement
2nd grade

HOMELESSNESS

Perlman & Fantuzzo, 2010
EARLY AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Reading scores in 1st grade

EARLY AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

EARLY AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Many children function well despite experiencing homelessness

Protective factors across levels:
- Child
- Family
- Neighborhood
- Broader context (e.g. City)
PROTECTION ACROSS LEVELS

Child – cognition and self-regulation

Family – positive parenting

Neighborhood – safety and support

Broader context – social services
PROTECTION: CHILD AND FAMILY

Positive Parenting

Cognitive Functioning

Peer Relationships

Academic Achievement

Classroom Conduct

Herbers, Cutuli, et al. 2014
HOW CAN WE BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RESILIENCE?
EMERGENCY HOUSING

- Emergency housing as a temporary home for young children
  - Safe places to play and explore
  - Family routines and relationships
  - Connections to community
  - Model of developmental appropriateness for the family’s next residence
QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Duncan & Magnuson, 2013
in Center on the Developing Child, 2016
BUILDING EARLY LINKS FOR LEARNING

MAIN GOALS for the BELL Project:

1) Enhance the developmental friendliness of emergency and transitional housing
2) Increase enrollment in quality early childhood education for children experiencing homelessness

Photo Source: CURA Reporter, 38(2), 3-12.