



ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

The Root Cause Coalition is focused on a range of social drivers and their effect on public health. Below is a selection and summary of timely news articles, research and advocacy efforts focused on housing and health equity. This complements the Coalition's March Research on Housing and Social Drivers of Health, available [here](#).

Housing Disparities and Health Equity

Access to safe, stable housing has a profound effect on one's health and well-being. Poor housing conditions, such as overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, and exposure to environmental hazards, can lead to a range of health problems, including respiratory illnesses, injuries, and mental health issues. Housing instability, homelessness, and unsafe neighborhoods further exacerbate these health risks, impacting physical and mental well-being. Affordable, quality housing not only provides a foundation for good health but also facilitates access to essential amenities and social support networks, promoting overall well-being and reducing health disparities within communities.

[Medicaid's prescription for health includes food and housing in some states - February 2024](#)

A growing number of states across the US are broadening the health coverage of Medicaid to include housing aid and food security in an effort to cope with social needs and lessen health inequities. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) worked with the White House for over a year to create guidelines on services that states can add under Medicaid, including up to six months rent, utility subsidies, and nutritious food. This effort to integrate social services into Medicaid has two goals: improve patient health and reduce the nation's growing medical costs.

[Blue Cross gives \\$648K in 2024 community grants to address housing-related health inequities - February 2024](#)

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island announced \$648,000 in grants through its annual BlueAngel Community Health Grants program. The awards went to five Rhode Island organizations and programs that work to address housing-related health inequities. The funds from these community grants will go to projects that address a variety of issues such as housing

and wraparound services, housing and outreach to those who are facing homelessness, and housing support for those with substance abuse disorders.

[Housing hardship and maternal mental health among renter households with young children - January 2024](#)

This study, involving more than 2,300 renter mothers in the U.S., looked at housing difficulties during the postpartum period and their link to maternal depression and anxiety. Findings concluded that severe housing problems raised depression risk, while anxiety risk was tied to consistent rent payment. These results highlight how different housing challenges impact mental health, and in turn, impact child and family health. Accessible housing support could ease financial strain and prevent mental health issues among low-income mothers with young children.

[Are housing circumstances associated with faster epigenetic aging? - January 2024](#)

This article detailed research outcomes using epigenetic data and social surveys to explore biological aging as a result of housing circumstances. Results found that living in a privately rented home is linked to faster biological aging compared to owning a home outright. This impact is even greater when historical housing, rent arrears, and environmental factors near the home are considered. However, results found that this aging can be reversed, underscoring the potential for housing policy to improve health.

[Mental health service use, barriers, and service preferences during COVID-19 among low-income housing and market-rate housing residents of Harlem in New York City - December 2023](#)

This study compared mental health service use, barriers, and preferences among 393 low-income housing (LIH) and market-rate housing (MRH) residents in Harlem, NYC. While counseling and medication use rates were similar across housing types, LIH residents reported higher use of mental health resources yet faced more than double the number of barriers. Noted barriers included: difficulty taking time off work; lack of insurance; trust issues with providers, and stigma. Because LIH residents use more mental health services but encounter more barriers, there is a need for targeted solutions for those struggling with mental health in LIH.

[Creating healthy, resilient homes and reducing Greenhouse Gases - December 2023](#)

This article explores how equitable building decarbonization, in conjunction with environmental justice organizations, has the capacity to alleviate health inequities across America. Decarbonization tactics such as weatherization and holistic home improvements can improve asthma and allergy outcomes by reducing air pollution infiltration as well as harmful exposure to health threats such as mold, pests, lead paint, and asbestos. In the past, decarbonization has disproportionately affected low socioeconomic status communities. However, when paired with social justice organizations focused on health equity, equitable building decarbonization aims to rectify past mistakes and create healthier, more resilient homes for all.

[New health problems emerge after COVID-19 for those who lack quality housing, health care - November 2023](#)

Recent findings from the Texas A&M University School of Public Health indicate that individuals facing persistent poverty and substandard housing are at a higher risk of developing new mobility issues after contracting COVID-19. Published in *Preventive Medicine*, this study delves into the correlation between social vulnerability and ongoing COVID-19 symptoms.

[Can affordable housing policies reduce health disparities for all? - November 2023](#)

This article discusses how housing policies can affect health disparities and focuses on Massachusetts Chapter 40B which aims to create affordable housing in higher-income areas. Results found that moving renters from low income housing to 40B rental housing improved minority newborn health significantly. This research highlights the potential health benefits of housing policies that address segregation and inequities.

[50 years after being outlawed, redlining still drives neighborhood health inequities - September 2023](#)

This study, completed by UC Berkeley, breaks down how redlining, a discriminatory housing practice that continues to affect communities today. Redlining has left non white neighborhoods with more pollution, fewer urban amenities, and worse reproductive health outcomes. Research shows that historically redlined areas suffer from higher levels of air pollution and fewer green spaces, contributing to negative health outcomes such as cardiovascular disease and maternal morbidity.