SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

Stable Housing Supports Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health

Find examples of practical steps to strengthen housing stability and quality in your own community—and support young children's health and development.

Having a stable place to call home is essential to children's health and development. It reduces family stress, provides a safe space for consistent sleep and daily routines, and may make it easier to build social connections. **Strengthening housing stability for families is thus a powerful opportunity to prevent significant stress and support a wide range of beneficial outcomes for children's physical and mental health.**

The quality and conditions of a child's home can also shape their development. Exposure to unhealthy housing—including poor ventilation, mold, and pests—can have direct impacts on young children's health and well-being. In recent years, it has become more difficult for families to find and keep a stable, healthy home, as home prices and rents have risen faster than household incomes. Climate change is also exacerbating these housing challenges through damage and displacement from extreme weather events.

Ensuring that all families have safe, stable, and healthy housing can have a multiplier effect across the developmental environment, with broad benefits for children's health and well-being in the moment and across the lifespan. **A wide range of practical solutions already exist at the federal, state, and local levels. The examples that follow highlight strategies that policymakers, organizations, and community leaders can replicate across the United States.**

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Improving Housing Stability and Quality to Support Healthy Development

Stabilizing Housing During Pregnancy

When evictions occur during pregnancy, they are associated with reduced birth weight, preterm birth, and even increased infant mortality. Healthy Beginnings at Home was created to improve these outcomes. First launched in Franklin County, Ohio, in 2018, the program provides pregnant people experiencing housing instability with two years of housing subsidies, as well as wraparound services to strengthen stability—such as job coaching and assistance with apartment searches and landlord mediation. An initial report found promising findings: 78% of infants in the program were born full term at a healthy weight, compared to 55% in a control group. The program also was associated with reduced state Medicaid spending and other costs. While the study sample was small, Healthy Beginnings at Home has since expanded to other Ohio communities—and yielded similar results helping to stabilize families during the prenatal and postpartum periods. **The initiative demonstrates the feasibility of coordinating housing and maternal health support to produce long-term benefits for young children, their families, and their communities at large.**

Interested in bringing this model to your own community? Check out the replication template.

Supporting Families at Risk of Eviction

HomeStart's Renew Collaborative is dedicated to helping families avoid eviction—and the associated harm to young children's health and development. The Boston-based program pairs tenants facing eviction for nonpayment with an advocate who helps create a plan to maintain stability, offers legal advocacy, and negotiates directly with landlords. Once they've reached an agreement that keeps the family in their home, HomeStart provides a one-time payment toward back rent. Over the next year, advocates continue to provide support as families work to repay the remaining balance, such as referring them to services. **Three years after the intervention, 95% of families remain housed.** The program, which prevents 450 evictions a year, also reduces demand on the state's emergency shelter system. The model has since been implemented in other locations across Massachusetts, as well as in Denver, CO, and Cincinnati, OH. **Through advocacy and a small rental assistance payment, HomeStart helps families maintain their housing—and protect young children from the negative impacts of eviction, both in the moment and across the lifespan.**

Improving Asthma Outcomes Through Home Repairs

A safe, healthy home can play an important role in shaping young children's health and well-being. Wisconsin's Asthma-Safe Homes Program puts that idea into practice—providing targeted home repairs that can improve symptoms of asthma, one of the most common diseases among children. Eligible households with children or pregnant parents receive up to $5,000 in repair services that address common triggers, such as mold and moisture, pests, and damaged roofs and carpeting. The program, run by the state's Department of Health Services, also offers in-home education on managing the disease and free asthma-friendly products, such as vacuums with HEPA filters, air conditioners, and dust mite covers for pillows and mattresses. **By helping families create safer, healthier homes, the program delivers improved health outcomes and quality of life, reduced health care costs, and fewer missed school days for young children.**

Interested in bringing this program to your own community? Check out their implementation toolkit.

Stabilizing Families After Extreme Weather

Extreme weather events—like floods, heat waves, and wildfires—can result in housing damage, displacement, toxic exposures, and other threats to families' housing stability and safety. After severe storms and flooding affected parts of Washington state in 2025, Whatcom County's Healthy Children's Fund invited local organizations to develop and implement recovery assistance specifically designed to support young children's health and development. The fund awarded $750,000 to two community-based organizations, which then provided direct assistance to meet the urgent needs of families with children under five or expectant parents. This included housing stabilization—such as home repairs not covered by insurance, rent or deposit help, and temporary lodging—as well as specialized services for families who had also experienced stressors prior to the storm, such as financial insecurity or domestic violence. **As extreme weather events become increasingly frequent in our warming world, the program shows how communities can help families regain stability in the immediate aftermath—and protect young children's health and development in the long term.**

Policy Snapshots: More Examples of Solutions in Action

Connecticut has a guaranteed right to counsel in eviction proceedings, which requires that tenants have access to legal representation. Preliminary research suggests such laws can help reduce family evictions and even improve some birth outcomes.

Child-friendly spaces in emergency shelters—like those created after Hurricane Harvey in San Antonio, TX—ensure children have a dedicated, supervised place to play, while allowing caregivers to focus on addressing the family's immediate needs.

In Salt Lake City, UT, the innovative SPARK development combines affordable housing with an on-site, high-quality childcare center, improving families' access to two critical needs.

→ Read the full paper

For the full paper on which this guide is based, see Stable Housing Supports Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health.

Additional sources consulted in the creation of this Solutions Spotlight:

Healthy Beginnings at Home Explores a Novel Approach to Reducing Infant Mortality in Columbus, Ohio — U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Stable Housing, Healthier Moms and Babies — Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

The Renew Collaborative — HomeStart

Asthma-Safe Homes Program — Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Guaranteed Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings — Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center

Save the Children Responds Urgently to Child Victims of Hurricane Harvey with Child-Friendly Spaces in Shelters, Essential Items — Save the Children

SPARK opens in Salt Lake City: A new standard for affordable, family-friendly development in Utah — Salt Lake City

December 2025 Healthy Children's Fund Winter Storms Recovery Guidance — Whatcom Healthy Children's Fund

Two Local Nonprofits Awarded Nearly $750,000 Through Healthy Children's Fund Flood Recovery Program — Whatcom County