

# Healthy Moms: Improving the Quality of Life for Baltimore City Mothers

January 2011



## POLICY ACTION BRIEF

### MOTHERS' HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING ARE LINKED

CHILDREN'S HEALTHWATCH monitors the impact of economic conditions and public policies on the health and well-being of very young children.

*This report is based on information from 3,793 infants and toddlers who receive healthcare at the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Pediatric Emergency Department and Pediatrics at the Harbor.*

#### Mothers' Health and Mental Health

- 17% of mothers rated their own health as fair or poor (N=605)
- 19% of mothers reported symptoms of depression (N=701)

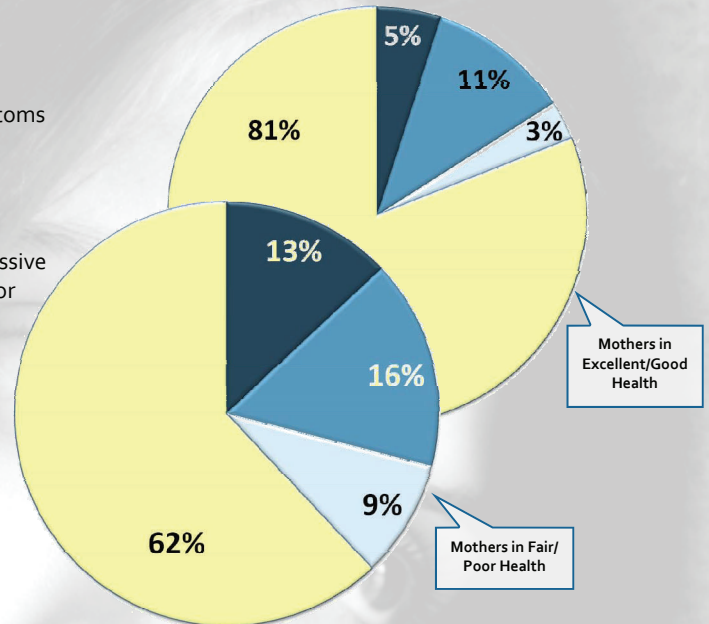
#### Children's Well-Being

Children whose mothers report depressive symptoms or their own health as fair or poor are more likely to:

- have developmental problems
- be in fair or poor health

compared with children of non-depressed mothers or mothers who report their own health as excellent/good.

■ Fair/Poor Health ■ Developmental Risk ■ Both ■ Neither



### WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS?

#### HOUSING INSTABILITY

Housing instability is characterized by having made two or more moves, crowding, temporarily living with others for financial reasons, and/or the inability to pay rent/mortgage on time in the past year. Mothers who experience housing instability (N=1248, 33%) are 1.6 times more likely to be in fair or poor health ( $p < .01$ ) and 1.9 times more likely to report depressive symptoms ( $p < .01$ ) compared with mothers who have stable housing.

#### ENERGY INSECURITY

Energy insecurity is characterized by a is characterized by having experienced an actual or threatened utility shut off, going without heat, and/or heating with a cooking stove. Mothers who experience energy insecurity (N=895, 25%) are 1.6 times more likely to be in fair or poor health ( $p < .01$ ) and 2.1 times more likely to report depressive symptoms ( $p < .01$ ) compared with mothers who are energy secure.

#### FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is characterized by a lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle for all household members. Mothers who experience food insecurity (N=493, 13%) are 2.2 times more likely to be in fair or poor health ( $p < .01$ ) and 3.3 times more likely to report depressive symptoms ( $p < .01$ ) compared with mothers who are food secure.

### WHAT IS PROTECTIVE?

#### EDUCATION

Mothers with a high school diploma or more (N=2663, 70%) are LESS likely to:

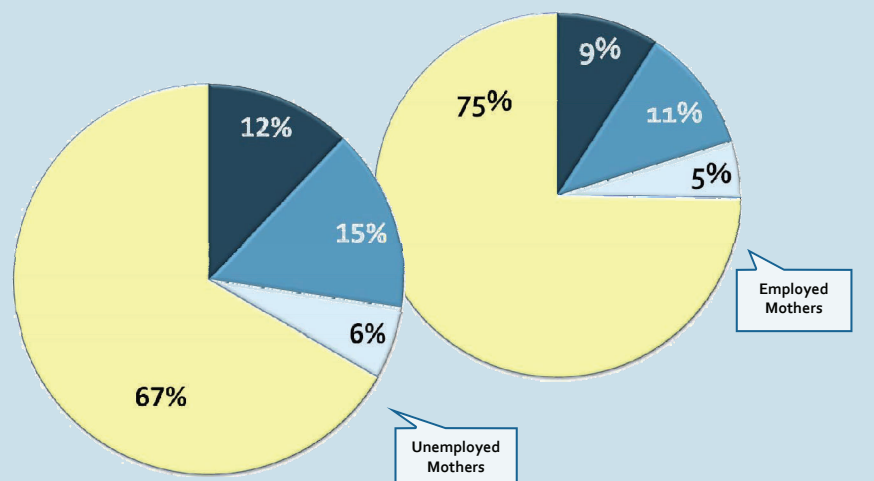
- be in fair or poor health
  - report depressive symptoms
- than mothers with less than a high school diploma.

#### EMPLOYMENT

Mothers who are employed (N=1662, 44%) are LESS likely to:

- be in fair or poor health
  - report depressive symptoms
- than mothers who are not employed.

■ Fair/Poor Health ■ Depress ■ Both ■ Neither



# Summary and Implications

## SUMMARY:

Baltimore mothers with symptoms of depression or poor health have children at increased risk for developmental problems, poor health, and hospitalizations.

Baltimore mothers who experience economic stressors are more likely to have symptoms of depression and poor health.

Baltimore mothers with a high school education or more, or who are employed, are less likely to have symptoms of depression and poor health.

Assistance programs (e.g., TANF, SNAP, WIC) to alleviate financial stressors may reduce economic pressure, but do not address mental and physical health needs for mothers.

Multiple services are needed for low-income mothers with young children to work toward optimal health and mental health for mothers.

## WHAT CAN PRACTITIONERS DO?

Ask about maternal depression, employment, education, and economic stressors

- Link mothers to services
  - Employment Training
  - Educational Opportunities
  - Public Assistance
  - Mental Health Services



*“We need a new and radical child-centered approach in which every program meant to help the poor first takes into account the health and development of children.”*  
Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH, Children’s HealthWatch

## RESOURCES:

### Mental Health Services in Baltimore

- **Baltimore Crisis Response:** 24-hour crisis hotline provides emergency community-based response to individuals in mental health crisis with referral to appropriate resources. 410-752-2272
- **Baltimore Mental Health Systems:** provides information, referral and oversight for mental health services. 410-837-2647 <http://www.bmhsi.org/>
- **Child and Family Therapy Clinic (CFT) (Kennedy Krieger Institute):** provides outpatient clinical services to families of children exhibiting a wide range of emotional and behavioral difficulties, parent training in behavior and stress management; problem solving strategies; communication training; and education in child development/childhood disorders. (888) 554-2080 [http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki\\_cp.jsp?pid=1977](http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki_cp.jsp?pid=1977)
- **First Step, Inc:** Community and family-oriented agency providing substance abuse/mental health care through education, prevention and treatment to children, adolescents. 410-628-6120 <http://www.firststepmd.com>
- **Institute For Life Enrichment:** Provides marital counseling, childhood and adolescent adjustment, alcoholism, drugs, aging, separation and divorce, feeling down and/or nervous, sexual problems, school problems, parenting and life transitions. (410) 532-3848 <http://www.bmhsi.org/ile.html>
- **University of Maryland: Child and Adult Psychiatry:** 410-328-1111 <http://medschool.umaryland.edu/Psychiatry/clinical.asp>
- **The Woodbourne Center:** provides mental health and educational services to children and their families. 410-433-1000 <http://www.woodbourne.org>

### Employment and Education Training Resources

- **Centro de la Comunidad:** bilingual services for education, employment, housing, immigration, and other social services. 410-675-8606/1-866-872-3021
- **GenesisJobs:** search for entry-level, non-professional jobs in metropolitan Baltimore. (410) 323-9400 <http://www.genesisjobs.org/>
- **Maryland One-Stop Career Centers:** job information and services to job seekers including a variety of workshops to assist people in finding employment. **Downtown:** 410-767-2148 **East:** 410-396-9030 **Northwest:** 410-523-1060 <http://www.dlir.state.md.us/county/bacity/>
- **Mayor’s Office of Employment Development:** Offers employment programs to both adults and youth. 410-396-3009 <http://www.oedworks.com>
- **Our Daily Bread Employment Center:** provides employment-related support services and training. 443-986-9000 - <http://www.cc-md.org/emergency/odbec.html>
- **STRIVE:** provides job readiness training, and other services 410-367-5691. [http://www.cfuf.org/STRIVE\\_baltimore](http://www.cfuf.org/STRIVE_baltimore)
- **The Choice Program:** assists over 200 youth in obtaining after-school and summer jobs. 1-888-277-4594 <http://www.choiceprograms.org>
- **WorkBaltimore.com:** provides free online job search for the Baltimore area. <http://www.workbaltimore.com>
- **Youth Opportunity (YO!) Baltimore:** GED, career tools, job readiness, career training, etc. **YO! Eastside:** 410-732-2661 **YO! Westside:** 410-545-6950 <http://www.yobaltimore.org>

### Early Intervention in Maryland

- **Baltimore Infants and Toddlers Program:** services for children experiencing a delay in development or who have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of delay. 410-396-1666 <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/bitp>
- **Center for Development and Learning (Kennedy Krieger Institute):** offers services for preschool children with delayed language development, learning problems, and attention problems through the coordinated efforts of the staff members. (888) 554-2080 [http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki\\_cp.jsp?pid=1398](http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki_cp.jsp?pid=1398)

## FURTHER READING:

- [www.childrenshealthwatch.org](http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org)
- [www.hungryinbaltimore.org](http://www.hungryinbaltimore.org)
- [www.cap4kids.org/baltimore](http://www.cap4kids.org/baltimore)

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