

HOUSING AND HEALTH

POSITION STATEMENT

Oklahoma Health Equity Campaign

"Housing policy is health policy. Neighborhood improvement policies are health policies. Everything that we can do to improve the quality of life for individuals in our society has an impact on their health and is a health policy."

~David Williams, PhD, MPH, Unnatural Causes, Place Matters

All citizens should have access to quality affordable and accessible housing that fosters a healthy and sustainable community in which to work, play and live. To accomplish this, we need to mobilize community partners to increase access to affordable and accessible housing for renters and homebuyers. This action includes researching and implementing opportunities for funds to revitalize and/or build quality affordable and accessible neighborhoods that are sustainable. Mixed income/mixed use housing is considered critical as we rebuild our neighborhoods and replace vacant and abandoned properties with quality and decent housing.

Facts

- [Housing Conditions and Health] Most Americans spend about 90% of their time indoors, and an estimated two-thirds of that time is spent in the home.¹
- [Neighborhood Conditions and Health] Very young children spend even more time at home² and are especially vulnerable to household hazards.
- [Housing Affordability and Health] "Affordable" housing is generally when a family is able to spend less than 30 percent of its income to rent or buy a residence. Due to low income, an estimated 17 million households in the US pay more than 50 percent of their incomes for housing.³ The lack of affordable housing is a significant hardship for low-income households preventing them from meeting their other basic needs, such as nutrition and healthcare, or saving for their future and that of their families.³
- [Housing Affordability and Health] Housing costs are affected by transportation costs: travel cost can range from 15% of household income in location-efficient neighborhoods to 28%+ in ones far from transit. Compact, walkable neighborhoods with access to transit, stores and services have high location efficiency.⁴ Therefore, increasing neighborhood sustainability and increasing household self-sufficiency will leave more households with more money to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Housing supports healthy communities by...

- [Housing Conditions and Health] Enabling good physical and mental health which depends on homes being safe and free from physical hazards and harmful exposures, thus providing individuals and families a sense of privacy, security, stability and control.
- [Neighborhood Conditions and Health] Promoting healthy neighborhoods by providing safe places for children to play and for adults to exercise that are free from crime, violence and pollution. In addition, providing access to grocery stores selling fresh produce that will encourage healthy choices over fast food outlet.³

Vision: All people and communities are healthy with no one at a disadvantage in achieving the best possible health

Mission: Maximize the health potential of all Oklahomans through resources and opportunities available in our communities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify permanent affordable and accessible housing solutions to support homeless veterans and the 100,000 homes campaign.
- Identify affordable and accessible housing solutions to include renters and home buyers. We must recognize the huge and growing need for those individuals and families with very low and extremely low income levels,⁵ which include people with disabilities, people working full-time at minimum wage and our working poor population.
- Identify the areas of communities where housing costs, location efficiency, low crime and walkability are available to provide an optimal choice for households with modest incomes.
- Develop plans to deal with current and future reductions in federal dollars.
- Long term planning goals to address the affordable housing needs of the baby boomers.

SOURCES

¹ Klepeis NE, Nelson WC, Ott WR, et al. "The National Human Activity Pattern Survey (NHAPS): A resource for assessing Exposure to Environmental Pollutants." J Expo Anal Environ Epidemiol, 11(3): 231-52, 2001.

² Klepeis NE, Tsang AM and Behar JV. Analysis of the National Human Activity Pattern Survey (NHAPS) Respondents from a Standpoint of Exposure Assessment. Final Report, Las Vegas, NV: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1995

³ RW JF, Commission to Build a Healthier American, Issue Brief 2: Housing and Health, September 2008, www.commissionhealth.org.

⁴ The Center for Neighborhood technology <http://htaindex.cnt.org/faq.php>

⁵ FY 2013 Federal Income Limits – The federal income limits for people receiving federal subsidized assistance in Oklahoma. (http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il/il2013/2013summary.odn?inputname=STTLT*4099999999%2BOklahoma&selection_type=county&stname=Oklahoma&statefp=40.0&year=2013)

CONCLUSION:

A core tenet of most of the successful housing projects is that addressing housing alone is not a winning model. To be successful, you must include education and community building.

www.purposebuiltcommunities.org

"...lack of access to jobs, nutritious foods, and safe, affordable housing have been harmful to the health."
Unnatural Causes, Place Matters

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