Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Cash Transfer Programs for Child Health—Elucidating Pathways and Optimizing Program Design

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More than 1 in 3 US children live in households with incomes less than 150% of the federal poverty level. Experiencing childhood poverty can have profound negative impacts on children's health. Nondirected cash transfer programs, such as the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit (eCTC), have demonstrated promise in reducing child poverty. However, it remains unclear how these programs should be designed to ensure that reductions in poverty translate into improved child health. In this Viewpoint, we describe how nondirected cash transfer programs influence the dynamics of child poverty, highlight pathways by which poverty reduction programs could improve child health, and provide suggested directions for future research and policy.

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Authors: Chén Kenyon, Aditi Vasan

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