

Division of Specialized Care for Children

Social Determinants of Health and Their Impact on Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

SDoH Impact on Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHCN)

No child is immune to adversity and the effects of SDOH. Yet, SDOH negatively impact CYSHCN more than their peers without special healthcare needs. CYSHCN are those children who have or are at risk for a chronic physical, developmental, or emotional condition and need health and related services beyond what children in general typically need.



A child's medical and social care needs increase as they experience more medical complexities. These increased needs are often unmet. Parental surveys from the [*National Survey of Children's Health*](#) give a detailed look at these unmet needs. In these surveys, families of CYSHCN report:

- They live in low-income households and unsafe neighborhoods.
- Their children's care systems are farther away from where they live and generally too costly.

CYSHCN have **Seven Times** the Healthcare Costs Compared to Average Pediatric Care

- Services (medical and educational) do not adequately meet their child's physical and developmental needs.
- Increased isolation and loss of traditional family support lead to parental unemployment or limited employment options to care for their child.

The relationship between SDOH and CYSHCN is complex and cyclical. SDOH impact a child's physical and mental health, which can influence their environment and worsen their SDOH. Just promoting healthy choices won't end these struggles. Healthcare organizations, public health departments, and their partners in education, transportation, housing, and others must take action to improve the conditions in people's environments.

We cannot look at SDOH and health equity for CYSHCN in isolation. For example, a family of CYSHCN may struggle to find stable accessible and quality housing, steady income and education opportunities. Without a clear path addressing these issues, attending to health needs can be a distant priority for the many Illinois families with a CYSHCN.

Opportunities: More federal agencies, foundations, and health-related organizations are taking an interest in SDoH in general. Here are a few areas that can benefit [CYSHCN](#):

- Assure integration, linkage, and continuity of services through a patient-centered [medical home](#)
- Increase access to and quality of behavioral health infrastructure
- Increase policy, systems, and environmental strategies around healthy living conditions by adopting a [health in all policies framework](#). This would focus on health and well-being in non-health sectors, including but not limited to:
 - Education
 - Child welfare
 - Vocational training
 - Rehabilitation
 - Housing and community development
 - Law enforcement
 - Criminal justice system
 - Transportation

Critical Areas for a Well-Functioning System



The Role of UIC’s Division of Specialized Care for Children

Parents and caregivers of children with special healthcare needs should have a strong support system. The University of Illinois Chicago’s Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC) is here to coordinate that support. DSCC is a statewide program that partners with Illinois families and communities to help children with special healthcare needs connect to the services and resources necessary to reach their full potential. DSCC guides families through their child’s journey with a medical condition and works with doctors, schools and community groups to create a seamless support system. Our staff works together with families to

develop a plan of care that addresses a child’s medical, social, behavioral, educational and financial needs. This process is called care coordination. It is free for all children with eligible medical conditions, regardless of their family’s income level. DSCC also helps medically fragile children remain in their family home rather than in a hospital or skilled nursing facility. Find out more about our programs and how we help on our website at dsc.uic.edu. You can also contact us at dsc@uic.edu or (800) 322-3722.

Top 10 Conditions Among Illinois CYSHCN: 2020-21

- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Asthma
- Externalizing (behavioral or conduct) Disorders
- Internalizing (anxiety or depression) Disorders
- Learning Disability
- Developmental Delay
- Speech Disorder
- Autism (ASD)
- Genetic Condition
- Brain Injury