

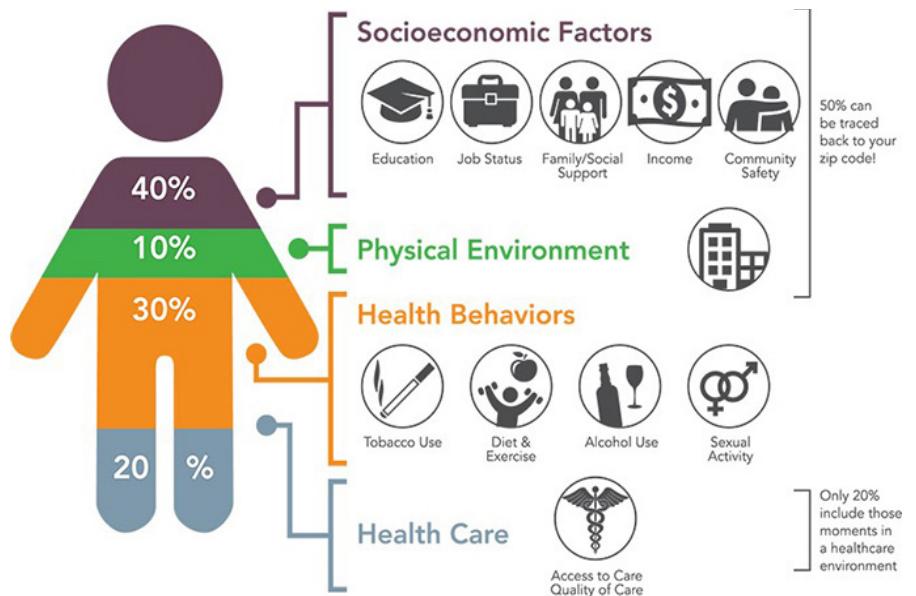
Division of Specialized Care for Children

Neighborhood and Physical Environment as a Social Determinant of Health for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Neighborhood and Physical Environment as a Social Determinant of Health

Beyond healthcare access and healthy behaviors, a person's neighborhood and physical environment greatly affects their health. According to *Healthy People 2030*, this includes:

- **Physical Environment:** quality of housing, availability of parks and recreational facilities, public transportation, etc.
- **Economic Environment:** quality of schools, availability of jobs, access to quality food and grocery stores, etc. Please see our *Economic Stability as a Social Determinant of Health for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Fact Sheet*.
- **Social Environment:** community support, reduction of unsafe environments and violent crime, etc. Please see our *Community and Social Context as a Social Determinant of Health for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Fact Sheet*.



Impact of Neighborhood and Physical Environment on Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

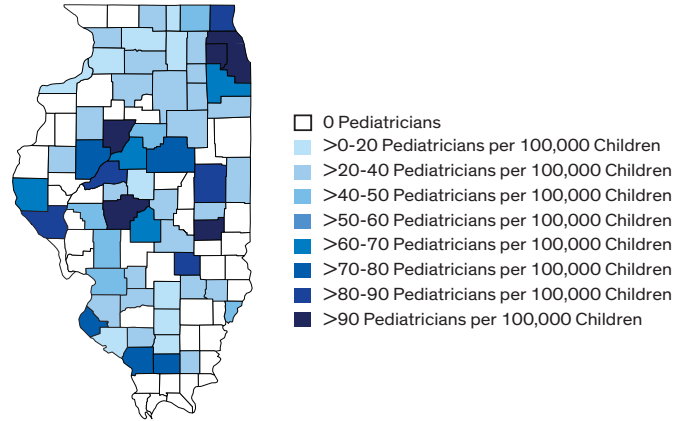
Children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) are broadly defined as children who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions. They also need health and related services of a type and amount beyond what children generally require, which makes them more susceptible to their environment.

- ✓ Air and noise pollution and heavy metals are directly related to and worsen health issues such as asthma, hearing loss, dehydration, and heart diseases

- ✓ Transportation is often limited for CYSHCN who must travel longer distances for supports and services, delaying treatment and quality of care. In Illinois, the average wait time for a pediatric specialist is **5.4 months**

Illinois State and County Specific Data

Please visit The American Board of Pediatrics website for the most current data at www.abp.org/dashboards/general-pediatricians-us-state-and-county-maps



- ✓ Higher crime rates can limit outdoor activities and social interactions.
- ✓ Housing conditions such as mold or lead exposure can cause health and behavioral complications.

According to the *National Survey of Children's Health in Illinois*:

- 19 percent of families with children with more complex needs have stopped working or reduced hours available to work because of their child's health condition.
- One out of five children with special healthcare needs experience bullying.
- 33 percent of CYSHCN families report they do not live in a safe neighborhood.

Opportunities

- Ensure all systems that service CYSHCN and their families are familiar with proper referral, resource, and care coordination options that follow the *National Standards for CYSHCN*.
- Support initiatives for caregiver support systems, such as housing, transportation options, and food.
- Support initiatives to correct environmental exposure that negatively affects CYSHCN, such as air and water pollution.
- Support initiatives that increase accessibility in the environment, such as:
 - Ramps, wheelchair-accessible elevators, and automatic doors.
 - Inclusive displays of signage such as color, height, and language including braille.

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

Parents and caregivers of CYSHCN should have a strong support system.

DSCC is a statewide program that partners with Illinois families and communities to help CYSHCN 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.

Find out more about the Division of Specialized Care for Children's programs and who we help on our website at dsc.c.uic.edu. You can also contact us at dsc.c.uic.edu or (800) 322-3722.