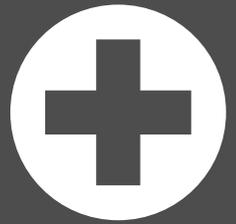




HEALTH

Improving Childhood Health & Nutrition
in DuPage & Kane Counties



DEFINITION

In DuPage and Kane Counties the major childhood health and nutrition issues fall into three categories: obesity, lead poisoning, and infant mortality.

Obesity is defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) equal to or greater than 30. For adults the calculation for BMI uses a person's height and weight. For children and teens, the calculation is more precise, using height, weight, age, and gender.

- [Kane County 2012-2016 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#)

Lead is a very strong poison and lead poisoning occurs when a person swallows a lead object or breathes in lead dust leading to a build-up in the body over a period of months or years. This can cause very serious health problems especially in children.

- [National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health](#)

Infant mortality has long been known to be the best single measure of the health of a population, group or community. This is measured as the rate of babies who die before their first birthday per 1,000 live births.

- [Kane County 2012-2016 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#)

CURRENT DATA

> Obesity and Nutrition

In DuPage County at least 1 out of 4 kindergarteners is entering school overweight or obese.

- [FORWARD DuPage Obesity Report](#)

Across Kane County, 1 child out of 5 is overweight. In some Kane communities that number is an even more alarming 1 out of 3.

- [Making Kane Fit for Kids 2020 Plan](#)

The primary risk factors for overweight and obesity are well known to be physical inactivity and an unhealthy diet. The DuPage Health Department's Community Health Plan cites the three contributing factors to physical inactivity as:

- sedentary life styles
- low levels of physically active recreational activity
- limited active transport

Unhealthy diets result from the contributing factors of:

- limited access to healthy options affected by the cost of healthy options and the over-abundance of unhealthy options;
- poor food literacy that is impacted by advertising, the low priority put on nutrition education, and limited nutritional information provided in restaurants;
- social norms and cultural values that might emphasize such behaviors as using infant formula

rather than breast-feeding, positively valuing being overweight or obese, and generally learning unhealthy patterns from friends and family.

- [DuPage Federation Community Needs Assessment Report](#)

> Lead Poisoning

The Center for Disease Control's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Advisory Committee recommended beginning intervention at 5 ug/dL (micrograms per deciliter); Illinois lags behind at 10 ug/dL. In 2010 alone, over 3,300 Illinois children were identified as lead-poisoned based on this definition. An additional 18,000 children, however, met the CDC's reference level. So, while the numbers are decreasing, every year we still identify thousands of new Illinois children whose long-term health and development are compromised by lead exposure.

- [Voices for Illinois Children Child Health Matters 2014 Report](#)

Unfortunately, Illinois leads the nation in the number of lead poisoned children. Outside of Cook County, Kane County has the highest rate of childhood lead poisoning in the state. Nearly 1,500 children in Kane are documented to have elevated blood lead levels.

- [Kane County 2012-2016 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#)

> Infant Mortality

Infant mortality in DuPage is historically below that of the state and nation although statewide and national figures are catching up. Birth outcomes for the Black population in DuPage are of particular concern. Interestingly, Hispanics achieve relatively high birth outcomes on par with White rates with lower measured levels of prenatal care. The most current data published in 2009 indicates the DuPage infant mortality has decreased to 5.2 deaths per 1,000 births, satisfying the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Healthy People 2020 objective (HP2020). Though sample sizes are small and rates fluctuate, African-American infant mortality consistently runs three to four times higher than the White rate.

- [DuPage Federation Community Needs Assessment Report](#)

In Kane County there is also a disparity in the infant mortality rate when compared by race/ethnicity. The overall rate in 2009 was 5.6. Comparing infant mortality for the different races and ethnicity, the White infant mortality at 4.9 was lower than the HP2020 objective of 6.0. The African American rate at 10.8 was more than double the White rate. Hispanic infant mortality rate was 5.9 per 1,000, also lower than HP2020 objective.

- [Cadence Health Community Health Needs Assessment](#)

WHY JLKD SHOULD CARE

> Obesity and Nutrition

Obesity is a national health concern and has reached epidemic levels. It is affecting the people of DuPage and Kane Counties with nearly the same frequency as anywhere else. It is more prevalent in minority and low-income populations, which are the growing population.

- [DuPage Federation Community Needs Assessment Report](#)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, being overweight or obese can increase the risk for health problems including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, stroke, and osteoarthritis. With a large young population, it is critical that this issue be addressed now to prevent future health problems which affect residents' quality of life and worker productivity.

- [Centers for Disease Control Childhood Obesity Facts](#)

> Lead Poisoning

Lead is highly toxic, especially to young children. Lead exposure can result in lasting impairment of a child's development and behavior such as decreased IQ and attention span and increased risk for delinquent behavior. Once lead poisoning occurs, the damage to a child's developing brain is done and the



focus must shift to addressing problems caused by the poisoning and to avoiding further accumulation of lead in the child's body. Lead can irreversibly affect the child's ability to think, learn, and behave. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead and treating children who have been poisoned by lead.

- [Kane County 2012-2016 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#)

> Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate is an indicator of the levels of prenatal and perinatal care for mothers and children. It is also an indicator of the health system's ability to respond to infant health problems.

- [DuPage Federation Community Needs Assessment Report](#)

In both DuPage and Kane Counties the rate is two or more times higher for African-Americans than for Hispanic and White residents. Looking at the current trend, which is improving, it will still take another two generations to close the gap in rates.

- [Kane County Health Department](#)

There is a need for additional effort to improve prenatal and perinatal care, and to target high-risk groups such as teenagers and older women in addition to monitoring historically higher infant mortality rates among African-Americans residents of DuPage and Kane Counties. By implementing various strategies, like increasing the number of African-American women who enter prenatal care in the first trimester, that gap can be closed by 2030.

- [Cadence Health Community Health Needs Assessment](#)

HOW JLKD IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUE CURRENTLY (CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS)

Currently JLKD provides direct service to organizations like SmartSteps (Thanksgiving food baskets), Salvation Army (breakfast snack bags), and the Northern Illinois Food Bank (food sorting) to address childhood obesity, nutrition, and hunger. In the recent past, the Kids in the Kitchen initiative also addressed nutrition education.

In regards to the infant mortality rate, previous direct service projects have included supply drives for organizations such as Teen Parent Connection.

HOW JLKD COULD ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Possible Strategies:

- Increase access to education about childhood nutrition
- Increase the number of children who receive snacks in early childhood care
- Reduce the number of children exposed to lead-based paint
- Reduce the number of families who use lead pots for cooking
- Increase the number of women who begin prenatal care in their first trimester
- Increase the number of parents with good parenting skills and postnatal support

Participate in coalitions to improve childhood health and nutrition operating in Kane (Fit for Kids, Healthy Places, All Our Kids), DuPage (Positive Parenting, FORWARD), and Illinois (Voices for Illinois Children).

Advocate for organizations supporting childhood health and nutrition, with the goal to increase funding.





EDUCATION

Improving Early Childhood Education
in DuPage & Kane Counties



DEFINITION

Early childhood education refers to education from birth to Kindergarten to ensure school readiness. School readiness refers to a variety of skills and competencies that children develop during early childhood that contribute to their later success in school, such as physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, communication and language usage, cognition and general knowledge, and approaches toward learning.

- [Illinois Kids "The DRDP-SR© \(2012\) Instrument and its Alignment with the Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten"](#)

CURRENT DATA

Evidence suggests that children's social-emotional development, math and reading skills, early cognitive and linguistic skills, and approaches to learning are foundational to children's success in school. Vocabulary (both oral and print) has been found to play an important role in children's comprehension and later reading abilities.

Children in poverty are underrepresented in overall preschool enrollment. In DuPage County the rate of children in poverty is 10% and in Kane County it is 17%.

In 2012 the preschool participation rate for low income children in Illinois was 44% compared to 60% for children in higher income levels, a 16% gap. Of the largest counties, in Illinois DuPage County had one of the highest preschool participation rates at 60% while Kane County had one of the lowest at 49%.

By age three the average child in a low-income household knows fewer than half as many words as a child in a high income household. Before even entering Kindergarten, children in the highest income level score more than two-thirds higher on standardized measures of language and early literacy skills than children in the lowest income group. When children enter kindergarten with lower achievement scores, they don't catch up- the achievement gap is even wider by 3rd grade. 9 year olds in low income areas are, on average, 3 grade levels below 9 year olds in high income areas in math and reading ability.

- [Social Impact Research Center Report on Illinois Poverty - Kane County](#)
- [Social Impact Research Center Report on Illinois Poverty - DuPage County](#)
- [Ounce of Prevention Fund "It's Possible. Closing the Achievement Gap in Academic Performance."](#)
- [Ounce of Prevention Fund "Starting Early to Close the Achievement Gap"](#)
- [Voices for Illinois Children "Disparities in Access to Preschool in Illinois"](#)

WHY JLKD SHOULD CARE

Early childhood programs are the most cost-effective way to ensure the healthy development of children in poverty and offer the greatest returns to society.

Studies indicate that early childhood education has long-term effects in:

- reducing dropout rates
- improving test scores
- better grade promotion rates
- fewer special education placements
- lower crime rates
- greater college attendance
- greater workforce involvement and higher income levels



At-risk children who don't receive a high-quality early childhood education are:

- 25% more likely to drop out of school
- 40% more likely to become a teen parent
- 50% more likely to be placed in special education
- 60% more likely to never attend college
- 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime

- [Head Start Collaboration Needs Assessment](#)

- [Ounce of Prevention Fund](#)

HOW JLKD IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUE CURRENTLY

Partnerships with SPARK, Smart Steps and Educare to enhance and support their current early childhood and school readiness programs. Book distributions with those partners and at many other events to provide books to low income children. In person reading events and family literacy nights with those partners and at other events.

HOW JLKD COULD ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Advocate for organizations supporting early development to increase program funding.



SHELTER

Ensuring Family Stability
in DuPage & Kane Counties



DEFINITION

Family housing stability is variably defined as having difficulty paying rent, spending more than 50% of household income on housing, having frequent moves, living in overcrowded conditions, or doubling up with friends and relatives. There is no standard definition or validated instrument to assess housing instability; there are limited data on its prevalence.

- [National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health: Margot B Kushel, MD, Reena Gupta, MD, Lauren Gee, MPH, JD, and Jennifer S Haas, MD, MSPH - J Gen Intern Med. Jan 2006; 21\(1\): 71-77](#)

CURRENT DATA

Despite being one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, DuPage County has an alarming shortage of affordable housing. The median home price is simply out of the realm of possibility for limited-income, working families. Yet studies show that homeownership plays a significant role in the social and financial stability of our communities.

- [DuPage Habitat for Humanity](#)

According to the DuPage Homeless Continuum of Care, during Fiscal Year 2012, a total of 1,384 men, women and children stayed in an emergency shelter in DuPage County or accessed emergency shelter services, but did not stay overnight. Of that number, 142 were families with children under the age of 18. During Fiscal Year 2011, 1,460 people utilized emergency shelters and of that total 258 were families with children under the age of 18. Even though the statistics have shown that those seeking emergency shelters have decreased, the number of homeless students increased from 1,000 in 2011 to 1,287 in 2012.

- [DuPage County Press Release](#)

71,040 residents (7.8%) of DuPage County residents live in poverty. 28,384 residents (3.1%) of DuPage County residents live in extreme poverty. With the fair market monthly rent for a 2 bedroom apartment in DuPage County at approximately \$958, it would take roughly 89 hours at minimum wage to afford rent.

- [Bridge Communities](#)

Because of high land costs and changes in demographics it is now very difficult for limited-income DuPage County workers - even families with two wage earners - to become homeowners. The median income in DuPage County is around \$70,000 annually while the median home cost is over \$350,000. This disparity between income and housing costs has resulted in many local families having to make the difficult choice between crowding into inadequate housing or paying too much of their income for housing.

- [DuPage Habitat for Humanity](#)

While the number of homeless individuals in Kane County is relatively low at any given time, homelessness and the threat of homelessness are increasing.

- [Cadence Health Community Health Needs Assessment](#)

The most recent point-in-time survey revealed 359 homeless individuals in Kane County on January 29th of 2014 with 63 of them being children under the age of 18. The same year Kane County identified 1600 homeless students.

- [Kane County Point-In-Time Summary](#)



WHY JLKD SHOULD CARE

Children who move often and do not have a stable living environment score lower academically in math and reading, and suffer from higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems. Children of homeowners are 25% more likely to graduate from high school and 116% more likely to graduate from college.

- [DuPage Habitat for Humanity](#)

Children are equally vulnerable to the ill effects of homelessness – homelessness compromises the very foundations of child development. For example, infants and toddlers who are homeless are at extreme risk of developmental delays and health complications. Brain development, language acquisition, and motor skills can suffer serious harm from the instability experienced during homelessness.

- [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness Volunteers of America](#)

A recent working paper from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child states that “Science does not support the claim that infants and young children are too young to be affected by significant stresses that negatively affect their family and care-giving environments.” Children who grow up in conditions of economic hardship often exhibit elevated stress hormone levels. This is especially true for children who live in chronic situations of poverty and experience an accumulation of adverse conditions (e.g., overcrowding, noise, substandard housing, separation from parent(s), exposure to violence, family turmoil).

- [National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. \(2005/2014\). Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain: Working Paper 3. Updated Edition.](#)

HOW JLKD IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUE CURRENTLY (CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS)

Currently JLKD provides direct service to organizations like Bridge Communities and Habitat for Humanity. JLKD does not have specific outcomes in regards to accessible housing and preventing homelessness.

HOW JLKD COULD ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Possible Strategies:

- Increase the number of housing resources for families with children
- Increase the number of families accessing housing resources
- Increase awareness of current programs available to families in need
- Provide emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention services

There are many shelters and transitional service providers in DuPage and Kane Counties addressing this issue. JLKD should seek to partner with individual organizations and participate in coalitions to prevent homelessness and improve family housing stability in both counties.