The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Poverty

Research shows that poverty in early childhood can have detrimental effects on a range of achievement, behavior, and health outcomes in adulthood. The time between a child’s prenatal year and 5th birthday is particularly critical, and incremental increases in parental income during this time period can have profound and positive long-term outcomes. The graphics below highlight some of this research. ¹

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**Born Below the Poverty Line**

Those born well above the poverty line² work 30% more hours per year and earn 124% more per year than those born below the poverty line³...

- $21,650
- 1,512 hours

**Born Well Above the Poverty Line**

- $48,090
- 1,963 hours

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**Utilize social assistance less...**

- $1,087 per year in food stamps
- $85 per year in food stamps

**Complete an average of 2 more years of school...**

- 11.83 years of schooling
- 13.96 years of schooling

**And are less likely to be overweight as adults...**

- 79% Are overweight
- 59% Are overweight

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Community development activities that empower low-income parents while their children are still very young can be important interventions. A $3,000 increase in parental income between a child’s prenatal year and fifth birthday could result in an estimated 19% increase in adult income and an additional 135 hours of work per year.⁴

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Footnotes:
2 Born well above the poverty line implies a household income of more than twice the poverty line.
3 All dollar values were adjusted to 2014 levels to account for inflation.
4 Duncan, Kalil and Ziol-Guest (2010).

For questions, please contact William Dowling in the Community Development department at William.Dowling@sf.frb.org