

Building Healthy Communities: Reducing Children's Exposure to Environmental Toxins

September 6, 2016 1:00 p.m. Eastern

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Ruth Hennig, The John Merck Fund

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**CHILDREN'S
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH
NETWORK**

Ensuring a Healthy Environment and Future for All Children: The Need for Urgent Action

**Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
Executive Director
Children's Environmental Health Network
September 6, 2016**

Children's Environmental Health Network

- ▶ U.S. National non-profit organization

Our Mission:

To protect the developing child from environmental hazards and to promote a healthy environment

Our Goals:

- ▶ Promote & support peer-reviewed **research**
- ▶ **Educate and Train**
- ▶ Promote sound child protective **policies**
- ▶ Better identify opportunities to improve children's environmental health using a cross-sector approach





Why Focus on Children?

Children are not just “little adults”



- They eat more food, drink more water, and breathe more air than adults
- They crawl on the floor and put things they pick up in their mouths
- All of their systems -- nervous, reproductive, hormonal -- are still growing and developing
- They cannot metabolize toxicants as well as adults



24 Years of Protecting Children's Health



- ▶ Chemicals commonly used are **not adequately tested** for their impact on human health
- ▶ Bottom Line: Children are still not as protected as they need to be!





How Are Children Exposed?



- ▶ **Ingestion (what we eat and drink)**
 - ▶ Food & beverages
 - ▶ Soil & dust



- ▶ **Inhalation (what we breathe)**
- ▶ **Skin absorption, Eye contact**
- ▶ **Pre-natal exposures**

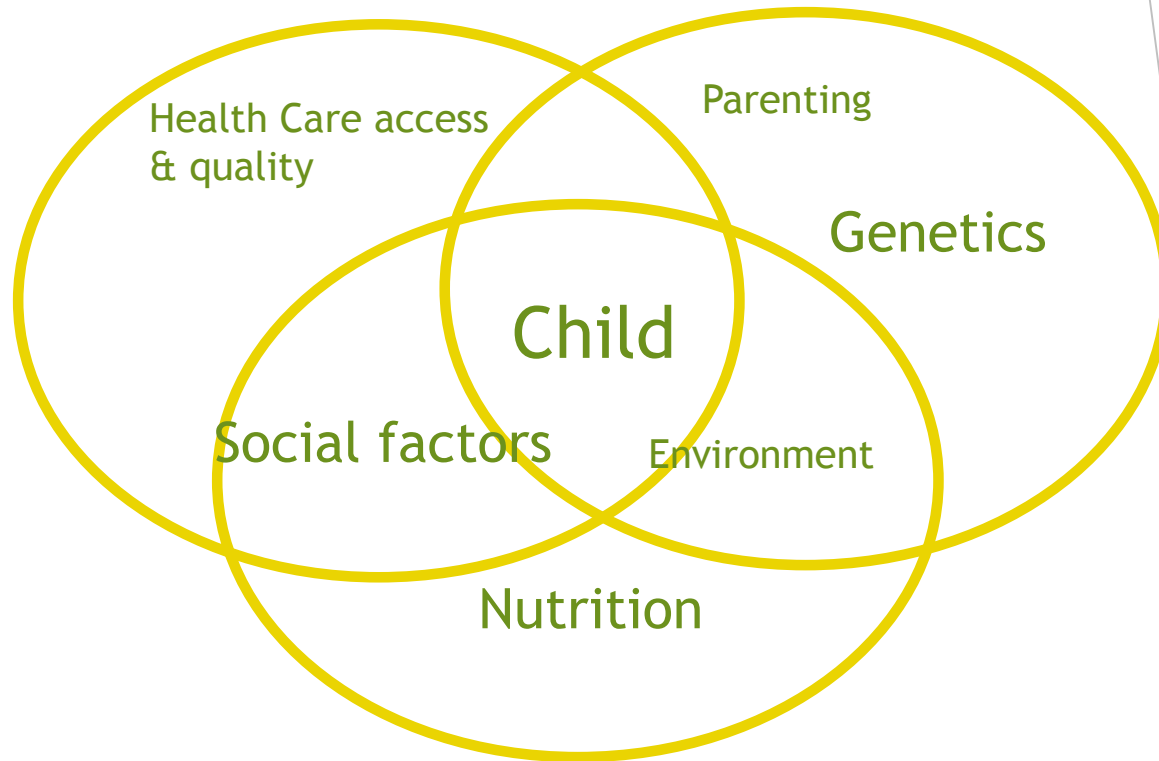


Today's Emerging Pediatric Health Challenges

- ▶ Early onset
- ▶ Chronic Illnesses
- ▶ Possibly first generation to see a shorter life expectancy than parents due to their poor health status



Olshansky, S. J., Passaro, D. J., Hershov, R. C., et al. (2005). A potential decline in life expectancy in the United States in the 21st century. *N Engl J Med*, 352, 1138-1145.





Is The Environment To Blame?

Today's health concerns are multi-factorial

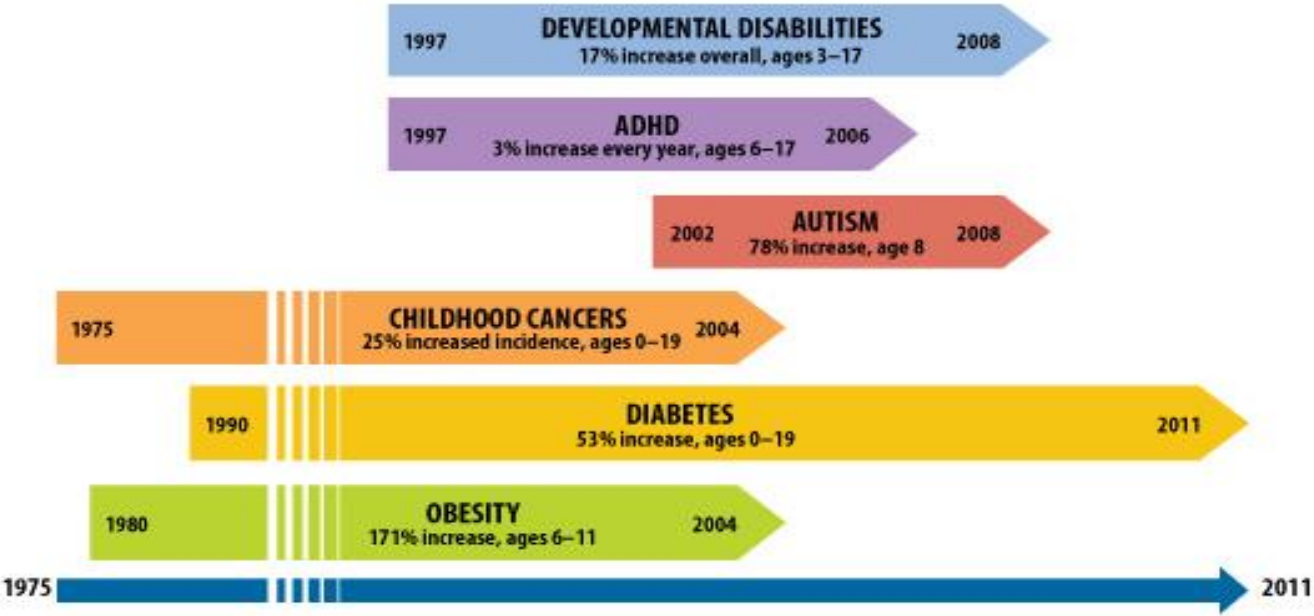
A child's environment is one of factors that shapes his/her health, development and future

- ▶ Is it the cause of all concerns? No
- ▶ Does it play a critical role? Yes



Increase in Environmental Health Concerns

Children's Health Harms on the Rise, 1975–2011





Trends in Childhood Asthma Rates



- ▶ Over 7 million children under 18 have asthma
- ▶ 3rd leading cause of hospitalization of children under 15
- ▶ One of the leading causes of school absenteeism
- ▶ Racial disparities seen in asthma rates as well: non-Hispanic black children were more likely to be diagnosed (22%) and to still have asthma (16%) than Hispanic (14% and 9%) or non-Hispanic white children (12% and 8%)

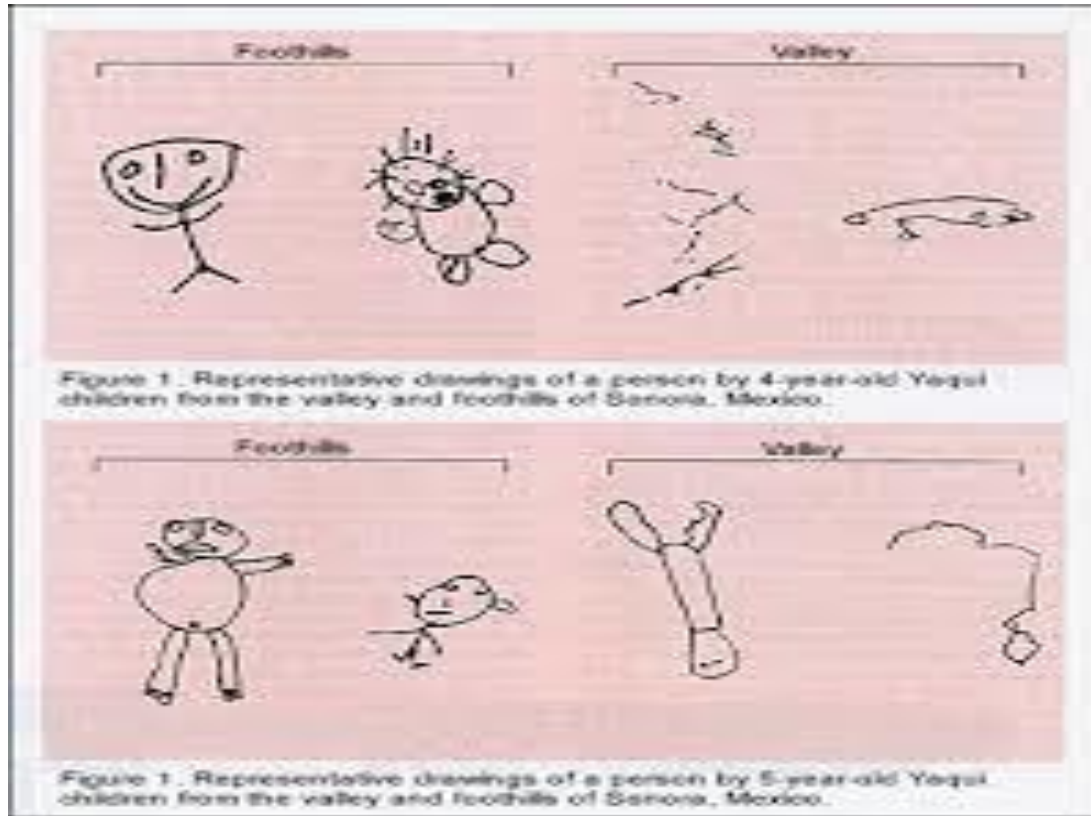


Children's Environmental Health

- ▶ Learning disabilities increased 191% between 1977 and 1994

- ▶ Autism:
 - ▶ Today: 1 in 68 (2014)
 - ▶ Up from 1 in 700 children
 - ▶ 30-40% of that is better diagnosis

Neurobehavioral Health Effects





Case Study: Freddy Gray's Life and Lead Poisoning

- African American who grew up in extreme poverty (Baltimore)
- Diagnosed with lead poisoning as an infant due to housing
- Never graduated from high school (special education)
- Arrested more than a dozen times – served two years in jail



Exposures and environments during childhood affect health across the lifespan, and children's environments are shaped by decisions across sectors.





Eco-Healthy Child Care®

- **A Program That :**

- Supports child care providers in creating child care settings that are as environmentally healthy as possible;
- Allows parents to choose child care facilities that are committed to creating a safer, healthier environment for children to learn and grow.

- **How to Get Involved:**

- EHCC Endorsement: 2-year endorsement granted to providers who comply with at least 24 of 30 best practice techniques.
- EHCC Train-the-Trainer: a workshop for teachers, trainers, health care professionals, licensing specialists and whoever else is interested in eco-healthy child care practices



Wingspread Summit



- ▶ In 2015, CEHN convened a Wingspread Retreat at the Johnson Foundation in Racine, WI
- ▶ Group of visionary leaders came together to create a vision statement and foundation for the *Blueprint for Protecting Children's Environmental Health: An Urgent Call to Action*
- ▶ Various disciplines represented: public health to economics to urban planning to business





Blueprint for Protecting Children



- ▶ The next generation must be better off than the last - it is our moral obligation to protect and nurture our children's health
- ▶ Vision of a society that puts children at the center
- ▶ Crucial aspects include:
 - ▶ Mobilizing greater societal understanding of CEH, with a strong priority on children and families
 - ▶ Creating knowledge essential for action and using knowledge we have now
 - ▶ Marshaling the engine of the economy to achieve environments where children can thrive
 - ▶ Building the political will in our institutions of government for child centered policies



Thank You!

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Healthy Babies Bright Futures



An alliance to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals during the first 1,000 days of development

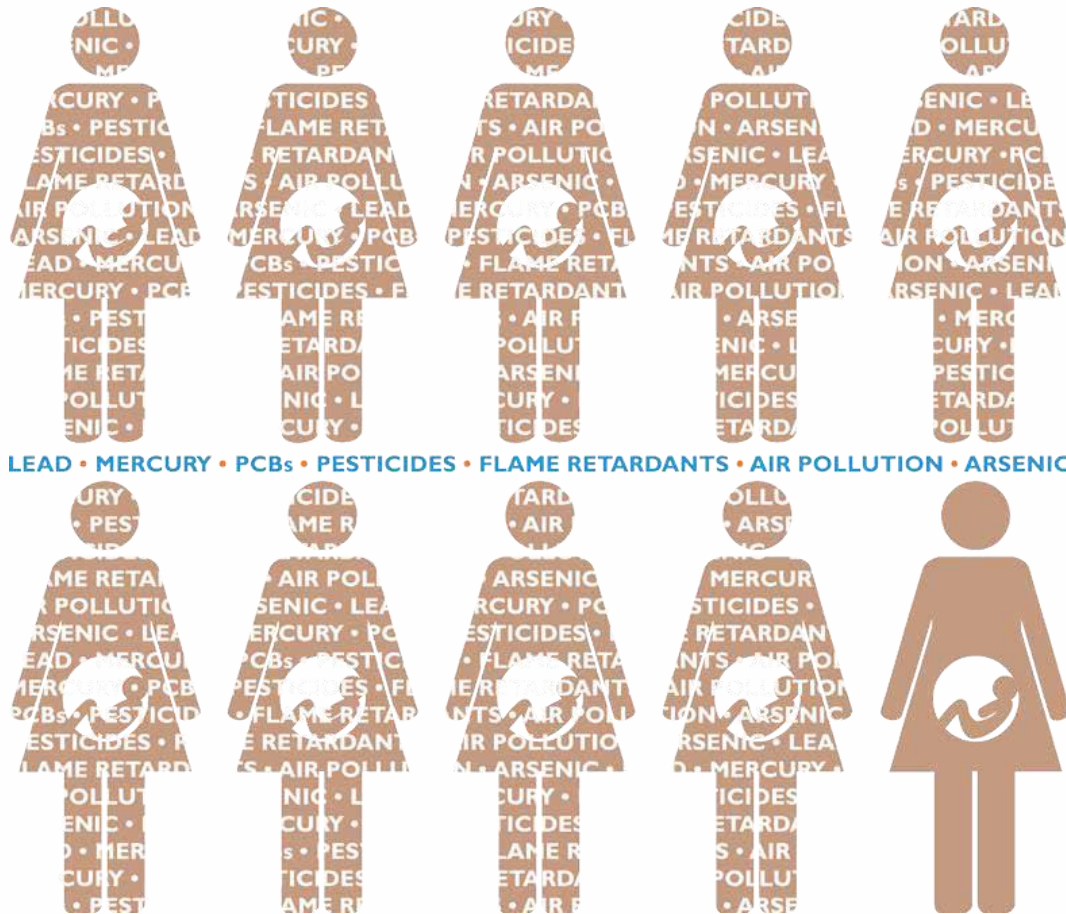


Babies Are In Harm's Way

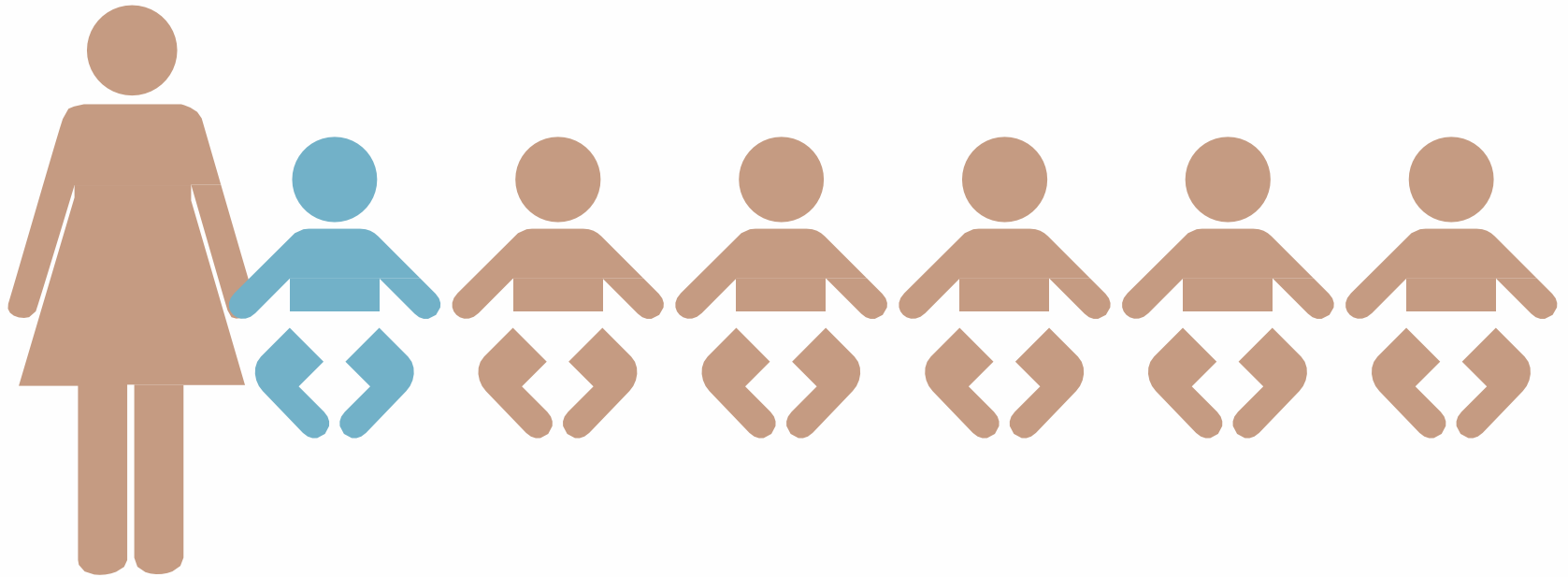
While tiny brains are forming and growing rapidly during the first 1,000 days, they are being harmed by toxic “brain drain” chemicals all around them.



“Brain drain” chemicals are present in bodies of 90% of pregnant women



Approximately 1 in 6 children in the U.S. has been diagnosed with a developmental disability.



The result? Babies' IQ Loss

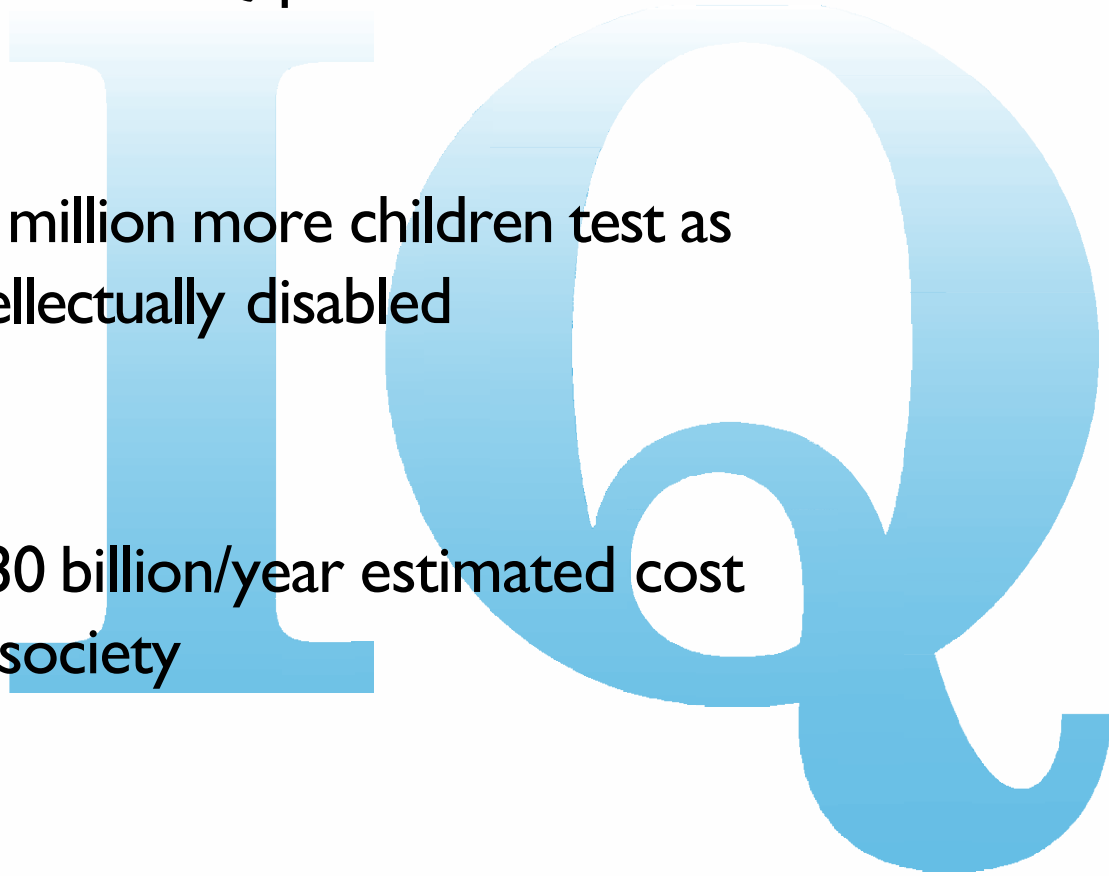
40 million IQ points lost

40M

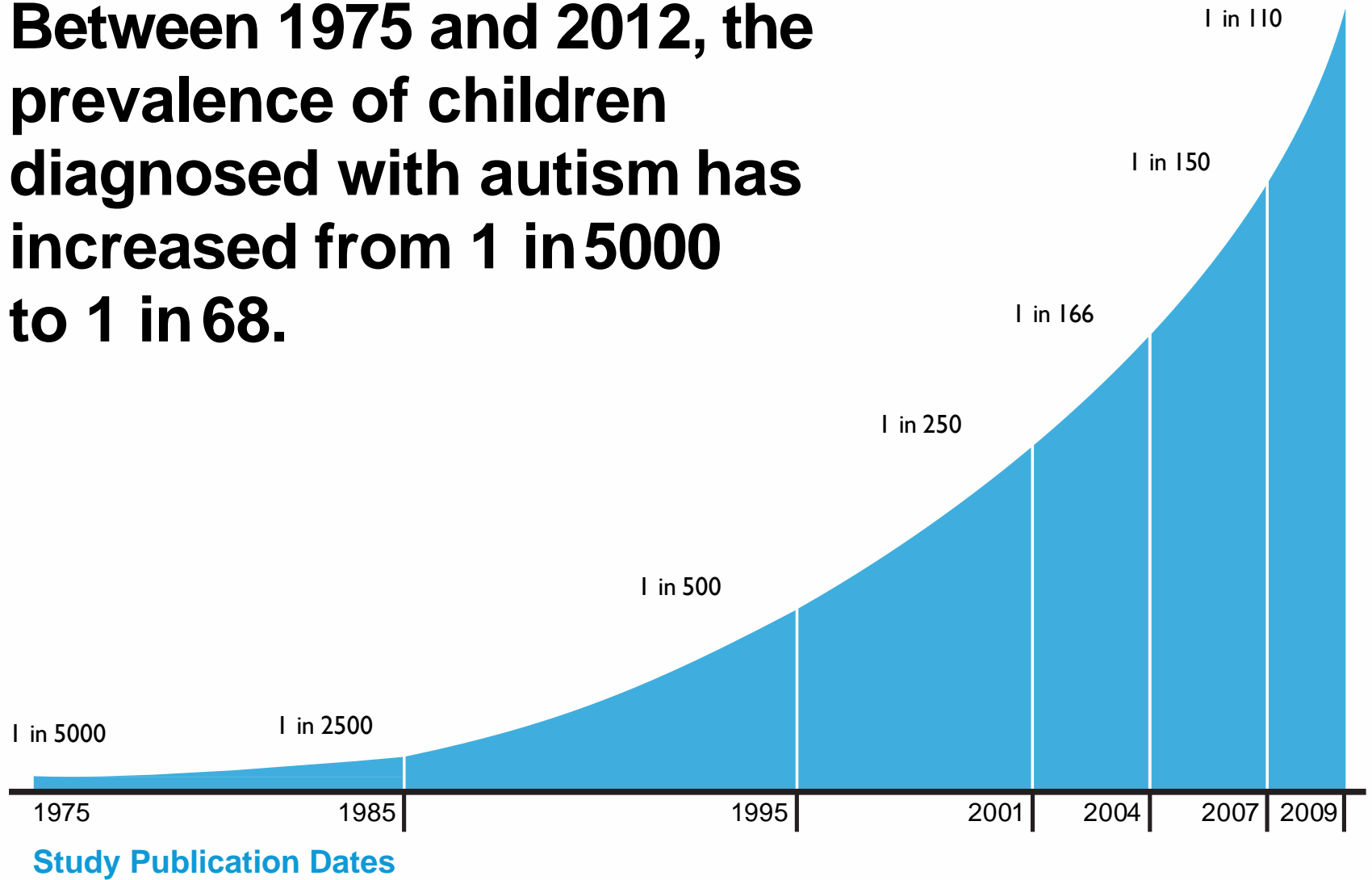
3.4 million more children test as
intellectually disabled

3.4M

\$130B \$130 billion/year estimated cost
to society

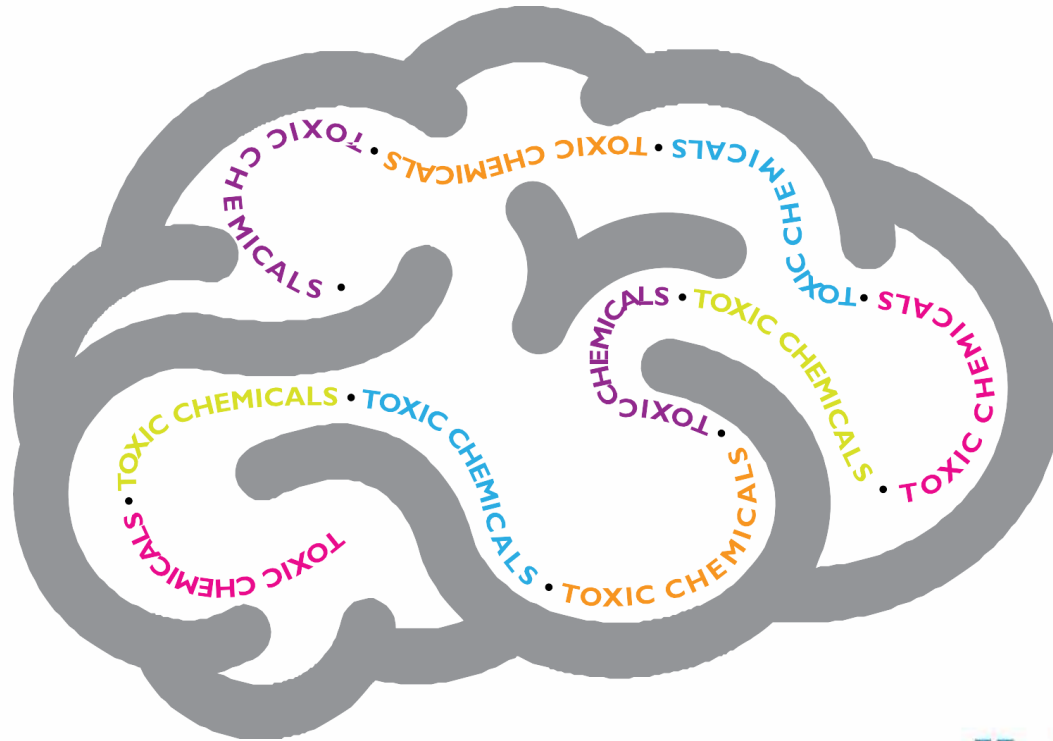


Between 1975 and 2012, the prevalence of children diagnosed with autism has increased from 1 in 5000 to 1 in 68.



A Silent Epidemic

In fact, the exposure to toxic chemicals is so prevalent and the impacts on brain development so widespread and severe that leading doctors and scientists call it a “silent epidemic”.



Healthy Babies Bright Futures



Bright Choices



Bright Cities

Science into Action



Program Fundamentals

Science-based

Data-driven

Delivering Measurable Outcomes



Bright Choices

Armed with key information, families, companies and cities can make homes and environments safer.



Collectively, individual actions drive change.



Bright Cities

Cities taking steps in ten action areas to protect babies from harmful chemicals during the first 1,000 days of development.



Healthy Babies Bright Futures supports those cities with resources and tools to reduce exposure in their communities.



Bright Cities

Focus on key action areas:

- Water
- Housing and indoor air quality
- Construction
- Medical screenings
- Outdoor air quality
- Building codes
- Institutional purchasing
- Food
- Child care regulations
- Parks and playgrounds



Science into Action

- Orchestrated release of consensus statement signed by 50 scientists and medical organizations
- National Call to Action to End Childhood Lead Poisoning in 5 Years
- Lead in Homes Initiative engaging citizen scientists in 10 cities





In 10 years, we will protect millions of children, ensuring that they have the developmental and intellectual ability to prosper and participate in productive communities.

Please join us!





W.K.
KELLOGG
FOUNDATION®

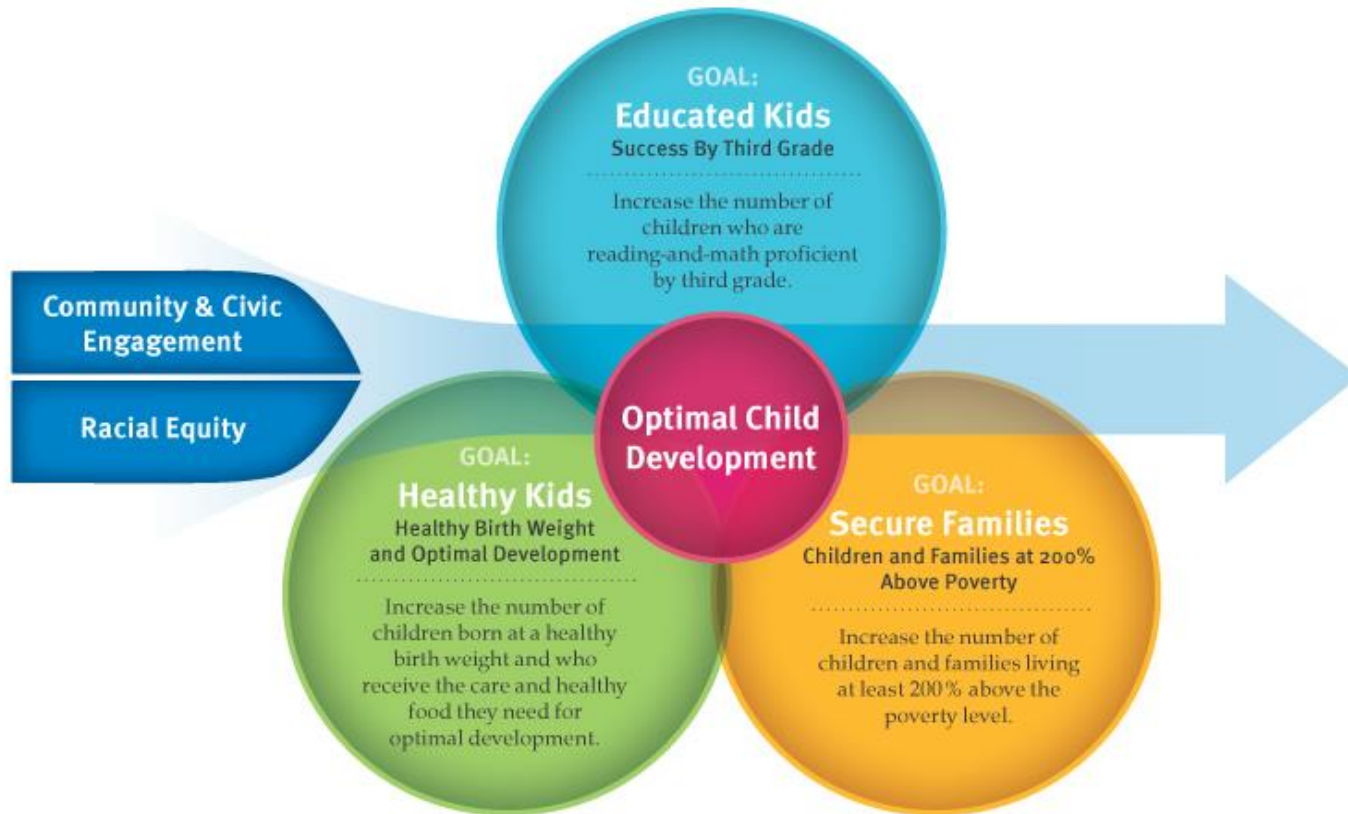
Ellen Braff-Guajardo

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All Children Should Have the Opportunity to Thrive



WHAT WE SUPPORT: OUR GRANTMAKING



Health In ALL..... *(Health IS all...)*



Safe Drinking Water



Buffer Zones (from pesticide drift)



Eco-Friendly Childcare



Greening of Schoolyards

Space to Grow



Ready to Leverage & Partner?



Education Facilities Clearing House

- *Lead in Drinking Water*, Sep. 13, 4:00 pm Eastern
- *Towards Healthy Schools: Reducing Risks to Children*, Sep. 22, 4:00 pm Eastern

Health and Environmental Funders Network

- *Grantmakers' Discussion: Children's Environmental Health*, Oct. 26, 1:00 pm Eastern

- More webinars on this topic?
- New topics you want to tackle or learn more about?
- Innovative work that you want to share?
- A question you want to pose to your colleagues?

Contact us at childrenfamilies@gih.org