

RURAL RESEARCH NOTE

THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) is a national nonprofit organization that supports affordable housing efforts in rural areas of the United States. HAC provides technical housing services, seed money loans from a revolving fund, housing program and policy assistance, and research and information services. HAC is an equal opportunity lender.



February 4, 2015

HUD Releases New *Evidence Matters* focusing on housing and children

HUD recently released its 12th edition of *Evidence Matters*, a research review focusing on housing and children. The edition examines evidence for how housing matters for children's physical and emotional health, achievement in school, and even economic opportunity.

The issue highlights research about the impact of various aspects of housing, such as quality and overcrowding, as well as research on neighborhood characteristics. However, according to the *Evidence Matters* review, the research on social characteristics of neighborhoods tends to focus on areas of highly concentrated disadvantage and high rates of crime and violence.

The *Evidence Matters* edition points to two well-known problems that threaten the health and safety of children related directly to housing quality - - lead and mold. Exposure to lead can have harmful and permanent effects on the cognitive development of very young children. Despite a wide perception that lead poisoning is an urban problem, lead paint is also common in older rural housing¹. Respiratory illnesses such as asthma can stem from the presence of mold and other indoor pollutants that have been linked to poor housing conditions such as inadequate ventilation or heating².

Overcrowding is another problem that is addressed in the *Evidence Matters* review. The issue discusses research that suggests crowded living situations can potentially affect a child's well-being and development due to factors such as lack of privacy, heightened stress, and noise levels. HAC research has shown that crowding is problematic in many rural areas as well. In rural America, where homelessness prevention services and shelters are often hard to access or less frequently available, people often "double up" with friends and family members in order to have a place to live³. Crowding is a particularly salient issue for Native Americans, as it is not uncommon for several families to share one home on some tribal lands⁴.

¹ *Lead Poisoning, Not Just a Problem for Urban Youth*. Rural Voices Vol 19.1. Housing Assistance Council.

² *Evidence Matters*, Fall 2014, HUD.

³ *Homelessness Declines, But is Still Difficult to Assess in Rural Areas*. Rural Research Note. December, 2014. Housing Assistance Council.

⁴ *Taking Stock: Rural People, Poverty and Housing in the 21st Century*. December, 2012. Housing Assistance Council

Contact Us

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON POVERTY IN RURAL AMERICA

Download *Evidence Matters*

For more information about research on children and housing, download the current issue of Evidence Matters at:

http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/EM_Newsletter_fall_2014.pdf.

Additional HAC Resources on Housing Quality

HAC's Decennial Report: Taking Stock: Rural People, Poverty, and Housing in 21st Century. <http://www.ruralhome.org/component/content/article/587-taking-stock-2010>

Access data on housing quality for your community at HAC's *Rural Data Portal*: www.ruraldataportal.org

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