



The Impact of Poverty on Children

THE FACE OF CHILD POVERTY IN RICHMOND

Poverty does not allow a child to be a child. Poverty affects a child's sense of security, self-worth, and family foundation.
(Child care worker)

Impact on Health

Asked about their children's health, parent spoke of developmental delays, asthma, allergies and frequent colds. Many worried about how they might afford braces and glasses. More numerous were concerns expressed by parents about anxiety, anger, sadness and depression. Research tells us that the stress of living in poverty can increase children's vulnerability to general health problems.

Impact on Mental Health

"We are very worried about our 5-year old daughter. She has become sad and withdrawn; her personality is so different than when we lived in China. We would like to send her to preschool but we cannot afford it. She just wants to go home to China."

(Richmond parents)

Impact on Social Networks

"I dread the birthday party invitations my daughter gets because the expectation is that we will buy a present for \$20."

(Richmond mother)



Impact on Behaviour

Some parents report that their children can't concentrate in class, are disruptive, lack social skills, or act out. While these behaviours may not necessarily be as a result of poverty, living in poverty can impact children's behaviour. These behaviours can be linked to lack of nutritious food, insufficient sleep, frequent changing of schools and stress and anxiety caused by family circumstances.

My child has had difficulties concentrating in school and has been tested for learning disabilities. She does not have any learning disabilities. I think it is because she has significant trauma. We lived in four countries before moving to Canada. Life has not been easy for us. It is still not easy.
(Richmond father)

My son does not bring home notices from school that cost money. He knows we just cannot afford it.

(Richmond mother)

Impact on Education

Parents were most concerned about the ability of their children to participate in the extra-curricular activities available in school such as field trips, lunch days and school trips. Repeatedly, they shared that while they know that they can access some of these activities for free, they feel humiliated in having to ask for help and they feel as though they are failing their children.

Impact on Play and Recreation

Children do not have access to the activities that interest them. Parents told stories of children wanting to play badminton, learn piano and organized sports. While parents expressed gratitude for the many free and subsidized activities available, they also acknowledged that transportation, program cost and time continue to be barriers.

My son longs to play piano. I can get a free piano on Craigslist but our apartment is too small for a piano and we cannot afford lessons.

(Richmond father)



Staff with experience and expertise in working with families living in poverty sat down and talked with 75 Richmond parents about the impact of poverty on their children and families. We learned about the human condition of living in poverty in Richmond. And we were introduced to amazing collective spirit, centred on wanting the best for their children. Parents were grateful that we wanted to hear their stories. They truly believe that our interest will help make a difference for their children.



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