

Poverty and early childhood outcomes ^[1]

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Excerpt from abstract

BACKGROUND: Children born into poverty face many challenges. Exposure to poverty comes in different forms, and children may also transition into or out of poverty. In this study, we examine the relationships among various outcomes and different levels of poverty (household and/or neighborhood poverty) at different points during a child's first 5 years.

METHODS: We used linkable administrative databases, following 46 589 children born in Manitoba, Canada, between 2000 and 2009 to age 7. Poverty is defined as those receiving welfare and those living in low-income neighborhoods. Four outcomes are measured in the first 5 years (placement in out-of-home care, externalizing mental health diagnosis, asthma diagnosis, and hospitalization for injury), with school readiness assessed between ages 5 and 7.

RESULTS: Children born into poverty had greater odds of not being ready for school than children not born into poverty (adjusted odds ratio = 1.54, 1.59, 1.26 for children born in household and neighborhood poverty, household poverty only, and neighborhood poverty only, respectively; all significant at $P < .05$). Similar patterns were seen across outcomes. For those born into neighborhood poverty, the odds of school readiness were higher only if children moved before age 2.

CONCLUSIONS: The level of poverty (household or neighborhood) and its duration modify the relationship between early poverty and childhood outcomes. Covariate adjustment generally weakens but does not eliminate these relationships.

Region: Manitoba ^[4]

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