

September 19, 2014

Two reports released yesterday by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) provide new state and local income, income inequality, and poverty statistics. According to the report, *Poverty: 2012 and 2013*, which compares statistics from the 2012 and 2013 ACS, 15.8 percent of the U.S. population (48.8 million people) had income below the poverty level in 2013 (not statistically different from 2012).

While the poverty rates in states that are home to a Children's HealthWatch research site were either unchanged or decreased by a statistically insignificant amount, the rates remained remarkably high in 2013 – Arkansas (19.7 percent), Pennsylvania (13.7 percent) Maryland (10.1 percent), Massachusetts (11.9 percent), Minnesota (11.2 percent). These data are especially troubling for some of our poorest citizens – infants and toddlers and their families.

On September 18<sup>th</sup>, Children's HealthWatch founder and Principal Investigator, Dr. Deborah Frank, was featured in a TalkPoverty.org [blog post](#) on the new U.S. Census Bureau poverty data. Dr. Frank notes:

*“Poverty’s toxicity does not end at birth. We and other researchers showed that children in families who experience the most basic level of material hardships associated with poverty — not enough nutritious food, inadequate or inconsistent access to lighting, heating or cooling, and unstable housing — suffer negative health and development effects, which constrain the next generation’s opportunities to live healthy lives as successful participants in education and the workforce.”*

It is not the federal deficit I worry about, but the preventable and treatable deficits in the bodies and brains of America's young children.



- Dr. Deborah Frank



Years of medical research and practitioner experience all point to the critical period of development during the first few years of life. Children in poverty cannot wait for the slow recovery from the 2009 recession to finally arrive; their bodies and brains are growing right now. As pediatricians and public health researchers, we never forget that the policies enacted in the capitals of our nation and our states will be written ultimately on the bodies and brains of our young children – and we're not the only ones who should be worried.

Children's HealthWatch is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy and child health experts committed to improving children's health in America. Every day, in urban hospitals across the country, we collect data on children ages zero to four who are from families experiencing economic hardship. We analyze and release our findings to academics, legislators, and the public to inform public policies and practices that can give all children equal opportunities for healthy, successful lives. For questions or further information, please contact Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Children's HealthWatch Research and Policy Director, at [sedc@bu.edu](mailto:sedc@bu.edu) or 617-638-5850.