

# Policy Matters: The Connection Between Poverty and People with Intellectual Disabilities

**At-a-Glance:** There is consistent research confirming the connection between poverty and intellectual disability. People with disabilities living in poverty have increased risk of poorer health and social exclusion. The financial and social impacts of childhood disability make families more vulnerable to poverty.

## Key Findings

- Child poverty affects health, well-being, opportunities, and experiences of youth with and without disabilities.
- People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be living in poverty than people without disabilities.
- Poverty is not a stable state. Families with children who have disabilities are more likely to descend into – and less likely to escape from – poverty.
- Families with children who have intellectual disabilities may have increased costs for transportation, child care, and equipment, as well as indirect costs including reduced employment opportunities for the mothers of these children.

## Putting It into Practice

- Policies that address poverty and disability can reduce the impact of both.
- Disability-friendly policies in employment and child care practices could prevent families from falling into poverty.
- “Welfare to work” policies without accompanying social supports will likely not be sufficiently effective in reducing rates of childhood poverty.
- Universal benefits tied to an average income rate have been shown to reduce levels of child poverty.

- Reducing family vulnerability to poverty should have a positive effect on the cognitive and social development of children with disabilities.

## More about this Research

Since people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be at risk of poverty, they are more likely to be in poorer health. Likewise, people who live in poverty are often exposed to environmental risks that can cause disabilities. Positive policy changes have been identified, but there are many funding and delivery challenges. Policies need to better consider the limitations on families imposed by poverty.

## Learn More

Access this research by visiting the [Project E3 Research Database](#).

Citation: Emerson, E. (2007). Poverty and people with intellectual disabilities. *Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*, 13(2), 107-113.

## Questions? Feedback?

Do you have questions or feedback about putting this research into practice? We're waiting to hear from you! Send us your [questions or feedback](#)

## Join Our Conversation

Have you tried any of these practices? Have you had success working with these populations in your area? Tell us more and [join our conversation](#).