

Using the Law and Lawyers to Address the Social and Economic Determinants of Low-Income Children's Health

Charity Scott, JD
American Public Health Association
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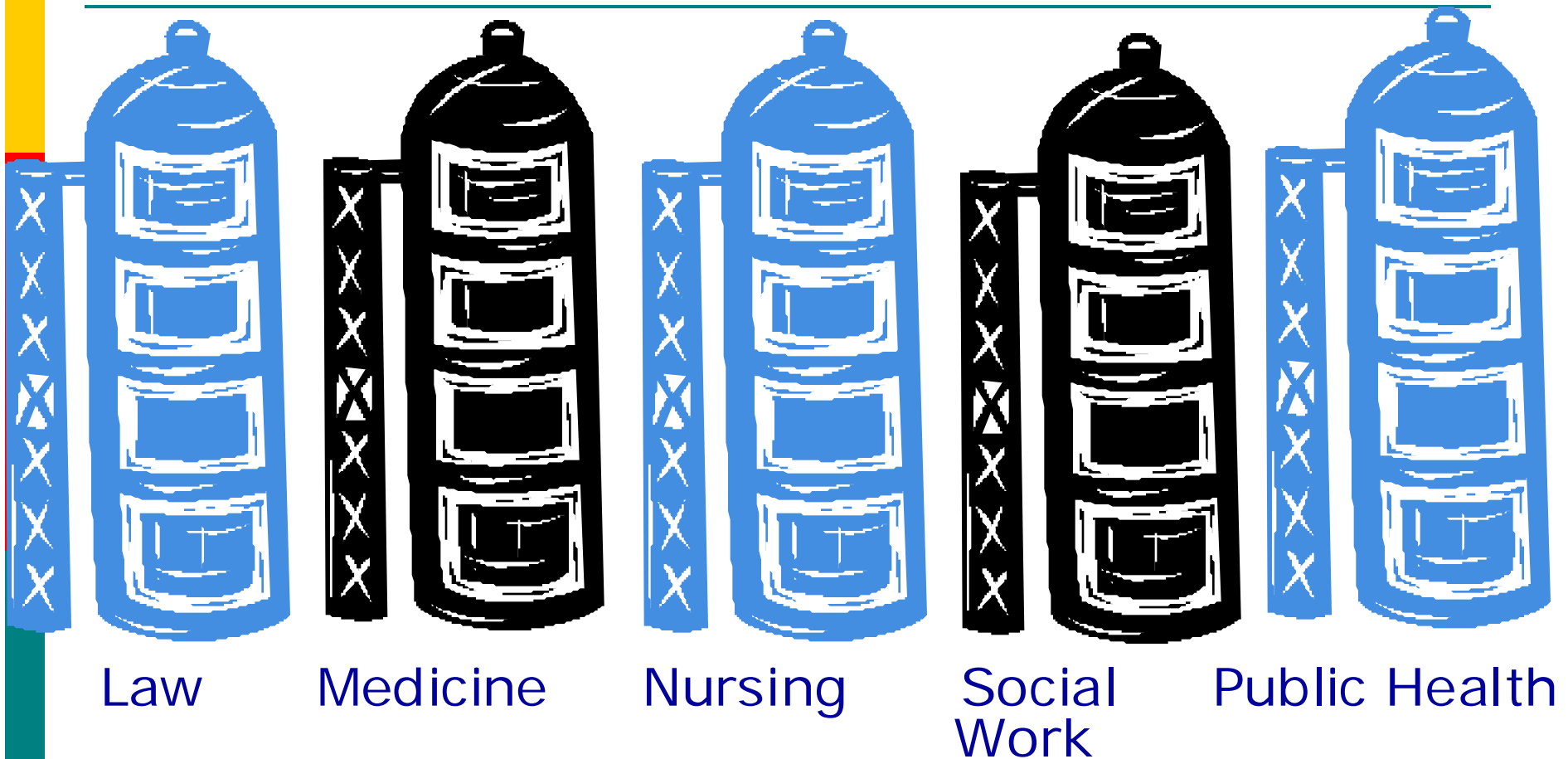


Need for professional collaboration



<http://www.mlpforchildren.org/Nuts--Bolts.aspx> Cartoon courtesy of Jack Maypole, MD (jackmaypole@yahoo.com)

Professional education silos





February
2007

“U.S., Britain ranked last in child welfare”

UNICEF, “Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries” (2007)

Average ranking position of child well-being in wealthy countries

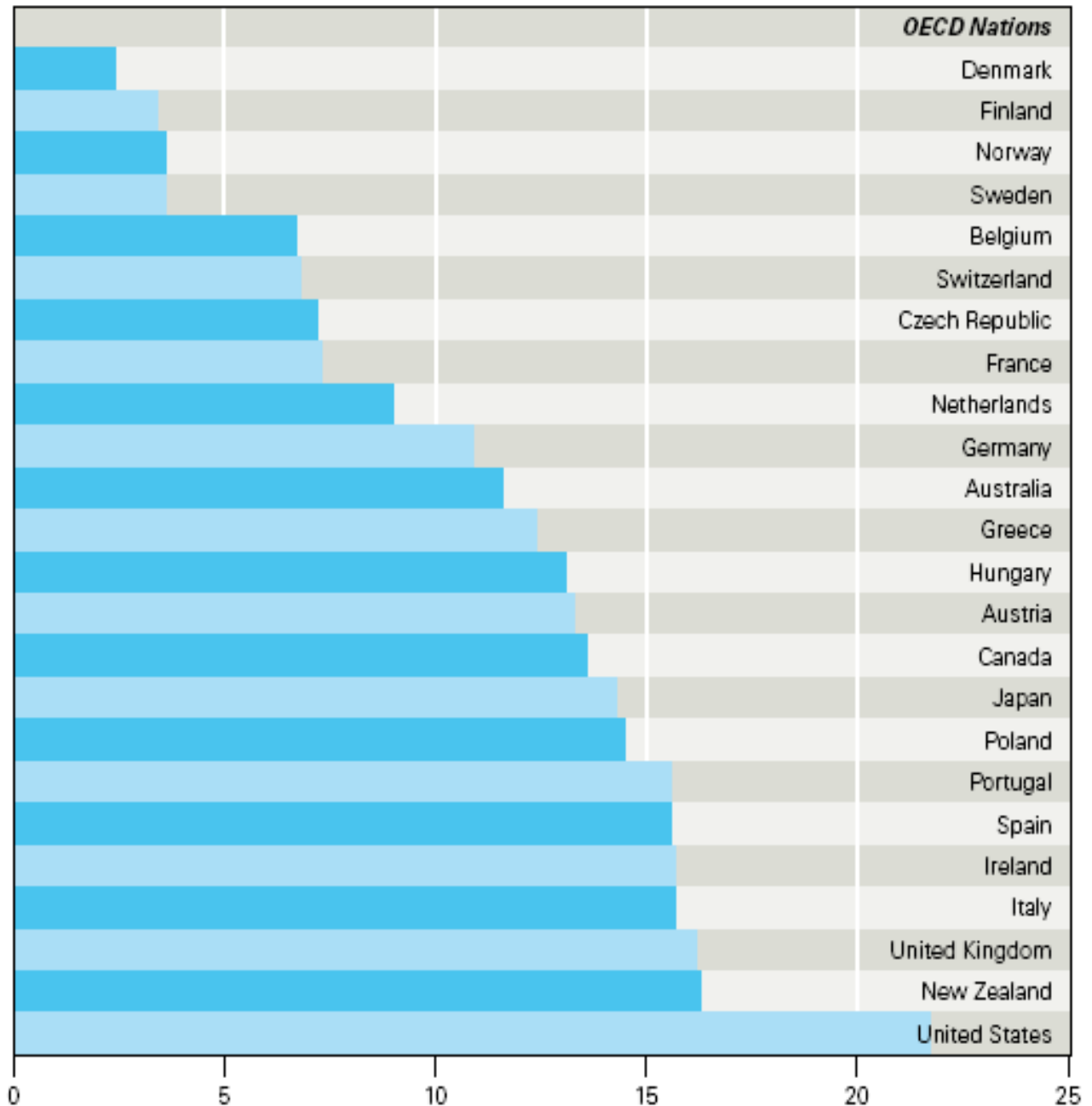
Netherlands	4.2
Sweden	5.0
Denmark	7.2
Finland	7.5
Spain	8.0
Switzerland	8.3
Norway	8.7
Italy	10.0
Ireland	10.2
Belgium	10.7
Germany	11.2
Canada	11.8
Greece	11.8
Poland	12.3
Czech Republic	12.5
France	13.0
Portugal	13.7
Austria	13.8
Hungary	14.5
United States	18.0
Britain	18.2

NOTE: Countries are listed by their average

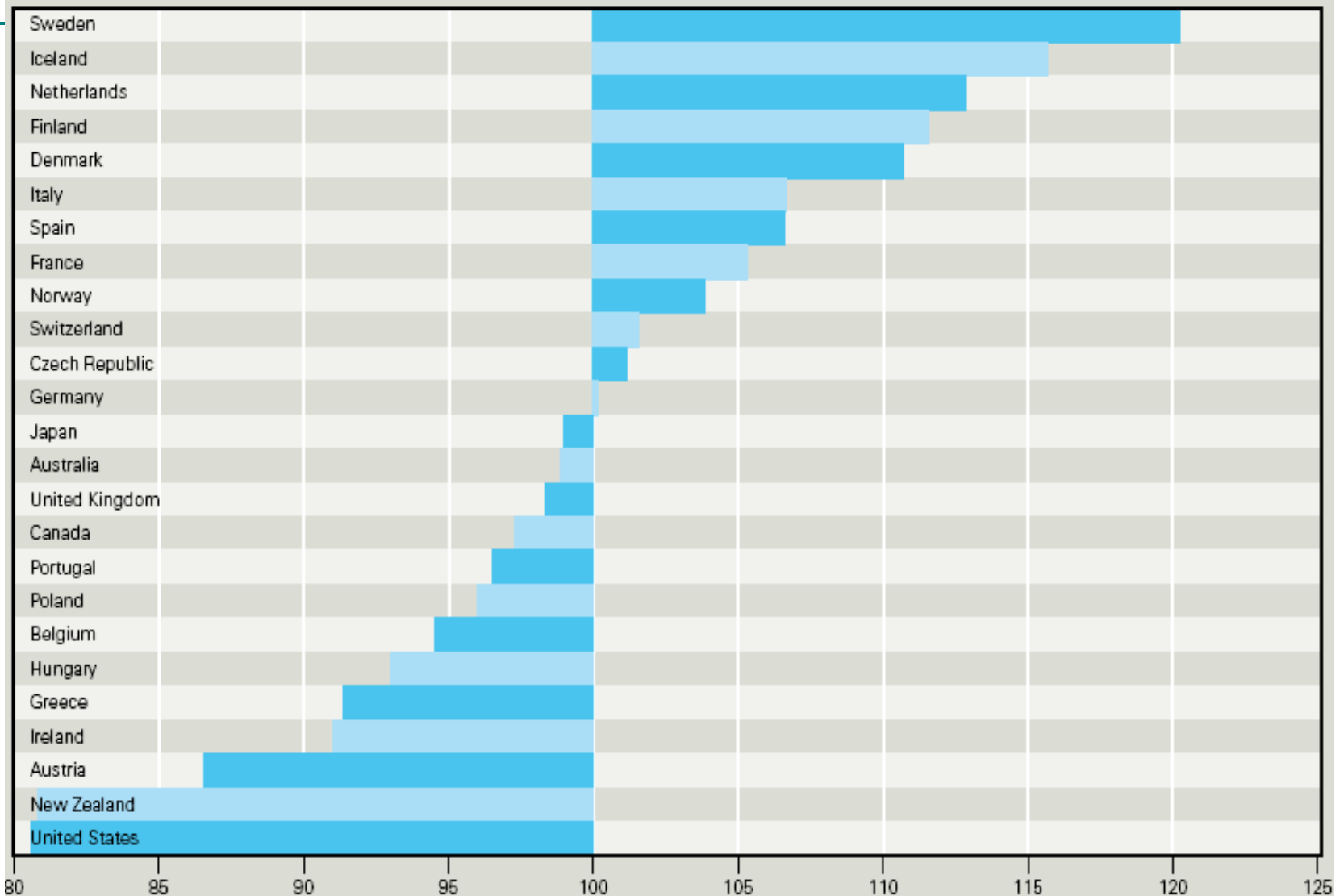
Relative poverty of children in rich countries

- UNICEF, "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries" (2007)

Figure 1.1 Relative income poverty: Percentage of children (0-17 years) in households with equivalent income less than 50% of the median.



Children's health and safety in relation to average of countries reviewed



UNICEF, "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries" (2007)

Overview

- 1) Health Law Partnership (HeLP) in Atlanta
- 2) Poverty is a public health problem.
- 3) Law and lawyers can address many poverty-related health issues.





HEALTH LAW PARTNERSHIP



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Change Theory

By combining the health care expertise of health care professionals with the legal expertise of attorneys, a comprehensive set of services can be provided to address the multiple determinants of children's health and well-being.

HeLP's Goals

- To be a model for interdisciplinary community collaboration delivering comprehensive legal and advocacy services and educational programs.
- To improve the physical, social or economic environment in which many children live, resulting in their improved health and quality of life.
- To create an interdisciplinary professional culture that encourages coordination, collaboration, cooperation, and excellence.



Legal Services

Addressing legal needs affecting children's health:

- Civil legal cases up to **200%** of federal poverty
 - FPL = \$20,650 for family of four (2007)
- Improving poor **housing** conditions
- Ensuring freedom from neglect or **violence**
- Establishing/preserving family **income** streams
- Obtaining educational accommodations and special **school** services
- Accessing state and federal **benefit** programs
- 3 to 5 problems per referral

Poverty and health: Children in Georgia



- **44%** of Georgia's children live in low-income families (income below 200% of federal poverty level (FPL))
- Over **50%** of children admitted to Children's hospitals live in families with incomes below 200% of FPL

□ Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006 Kids Count Data Book

How do poverty lawyers address public health?

- Poverty is a public health problem.
 - Poverty impedes access to health care.
 - Poverty contributes to poor health.



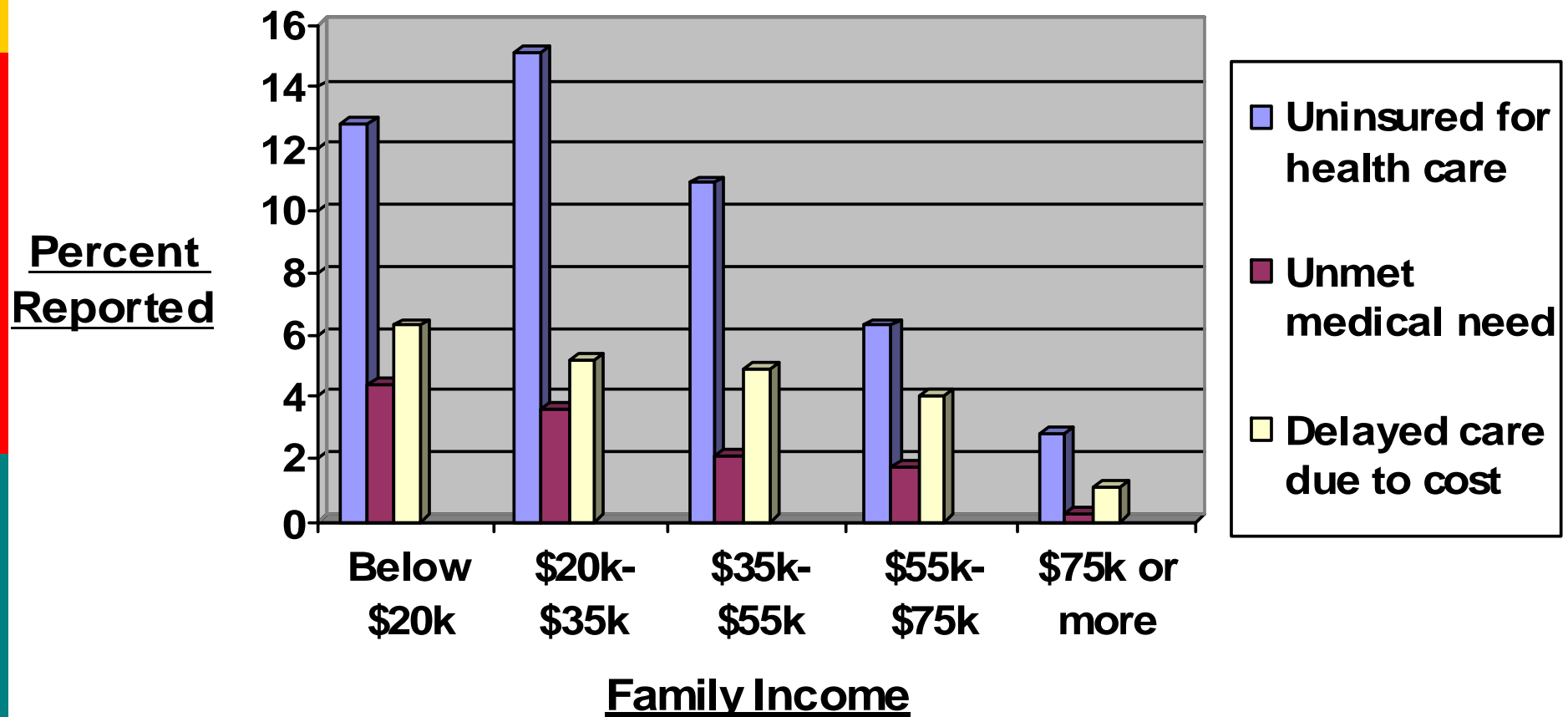
Poverty impedes access to health care

- ❑ Lack of money
- ❑ Lack of employment
- ❑ Lack of insurance



Distribution of children lacking insurance and health care access (measured by family income)

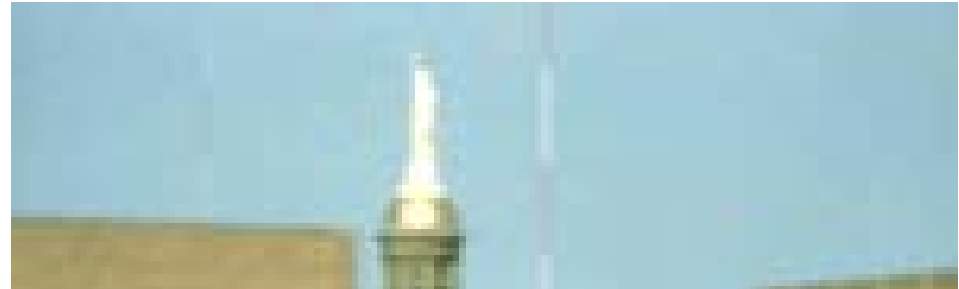
Measures of healthcare access for children ages 0-17 nationwide



- Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Children: National Health Interview Survey, 2005 http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_231.pdf



HEALTH LAW PARTNERSHIP



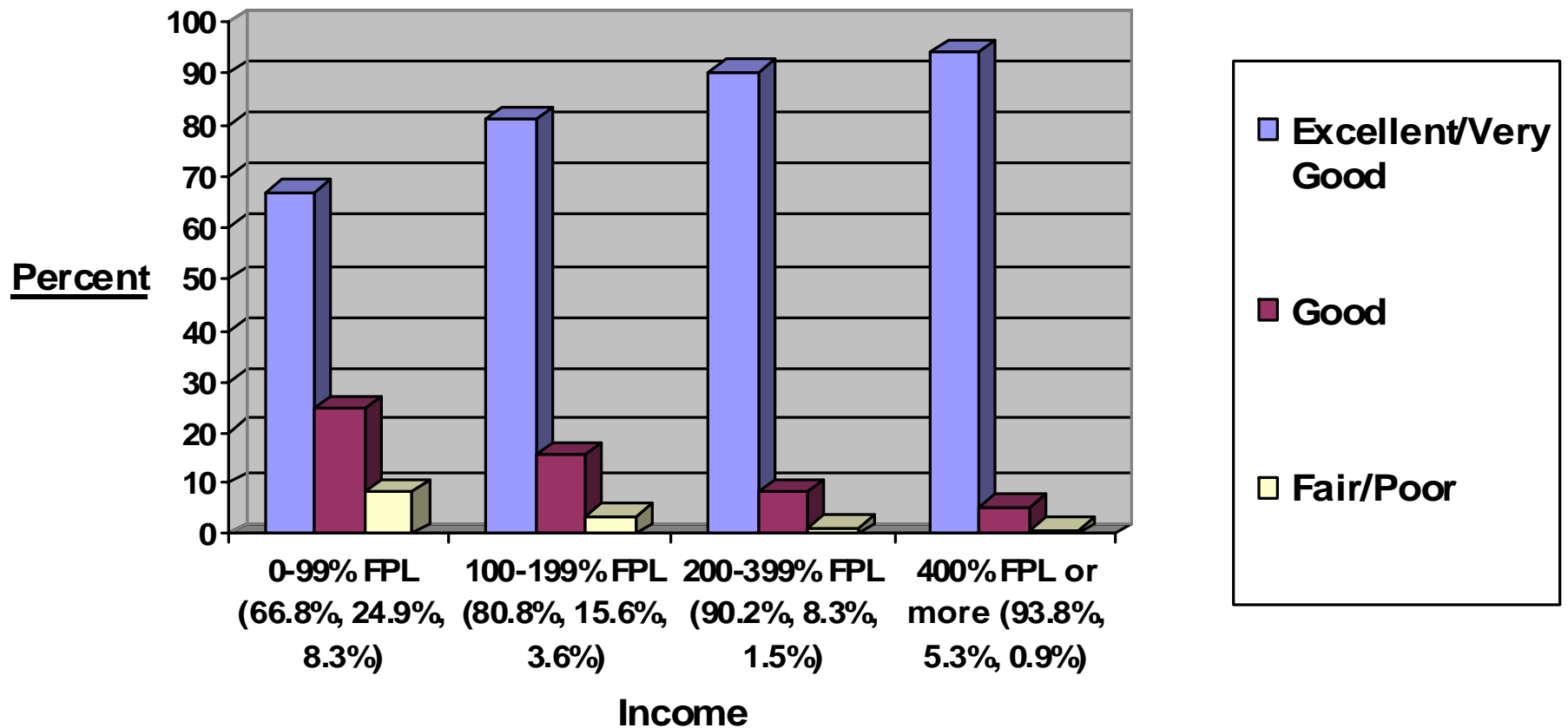
Health is not just about access to health care

- Poverty itself contributes to poor health



Relationship between family income and health in children generally

How Parents Nationwide Report Child's Health Status



□ National Survey of Children's Health, 2003, www.childhealthdata.org

Health is not just about access to health care

- **Poverty itself contributes to poor health**
- Other socio-economic determinants of health:
 - Exposure to violence
 - Substandard housing
 - Low education
 - Food insecurity

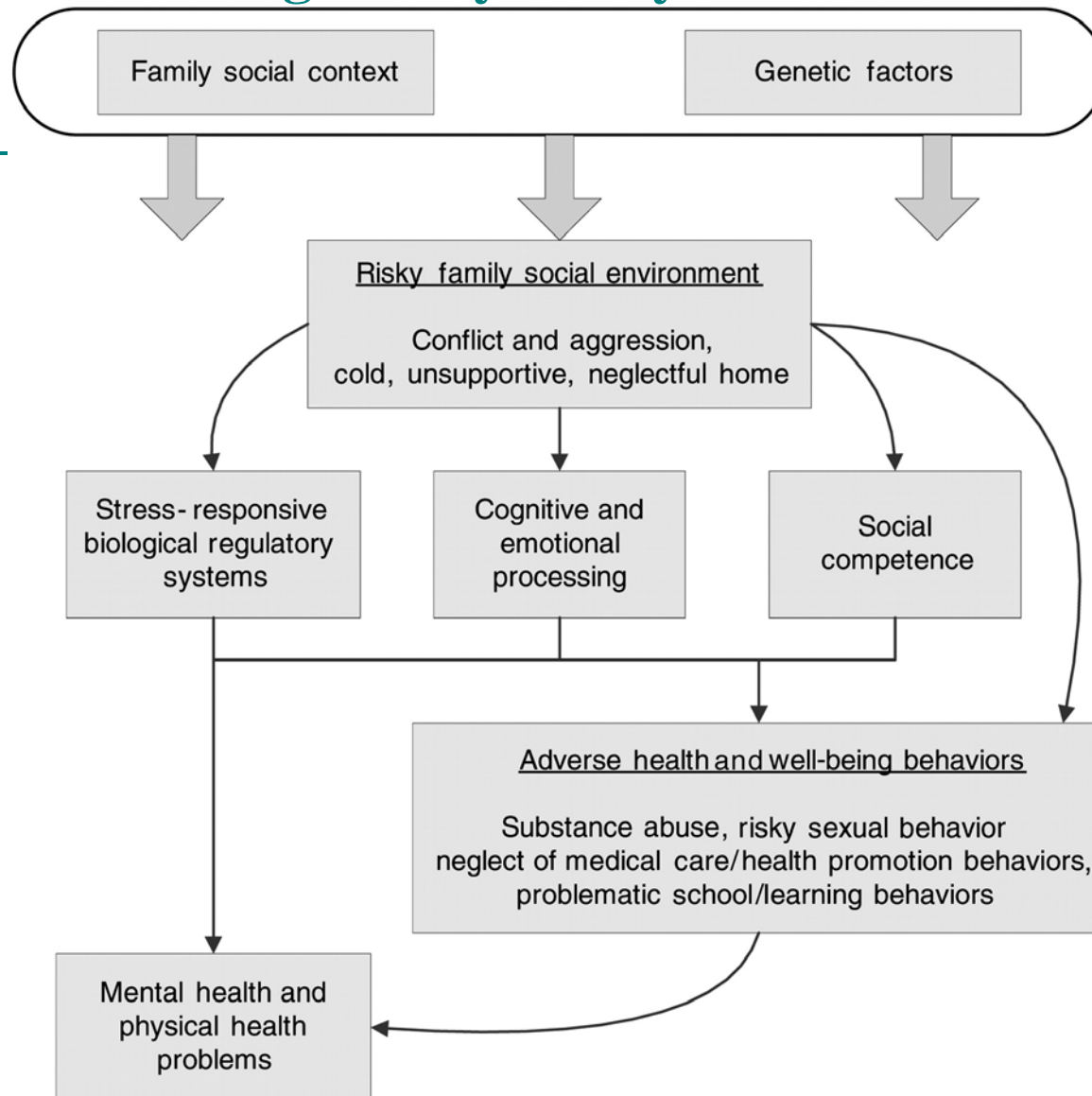


Poverty and intimate partner violence

Effects on children's health



Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Theoretical model linking a risky family environment and poor health



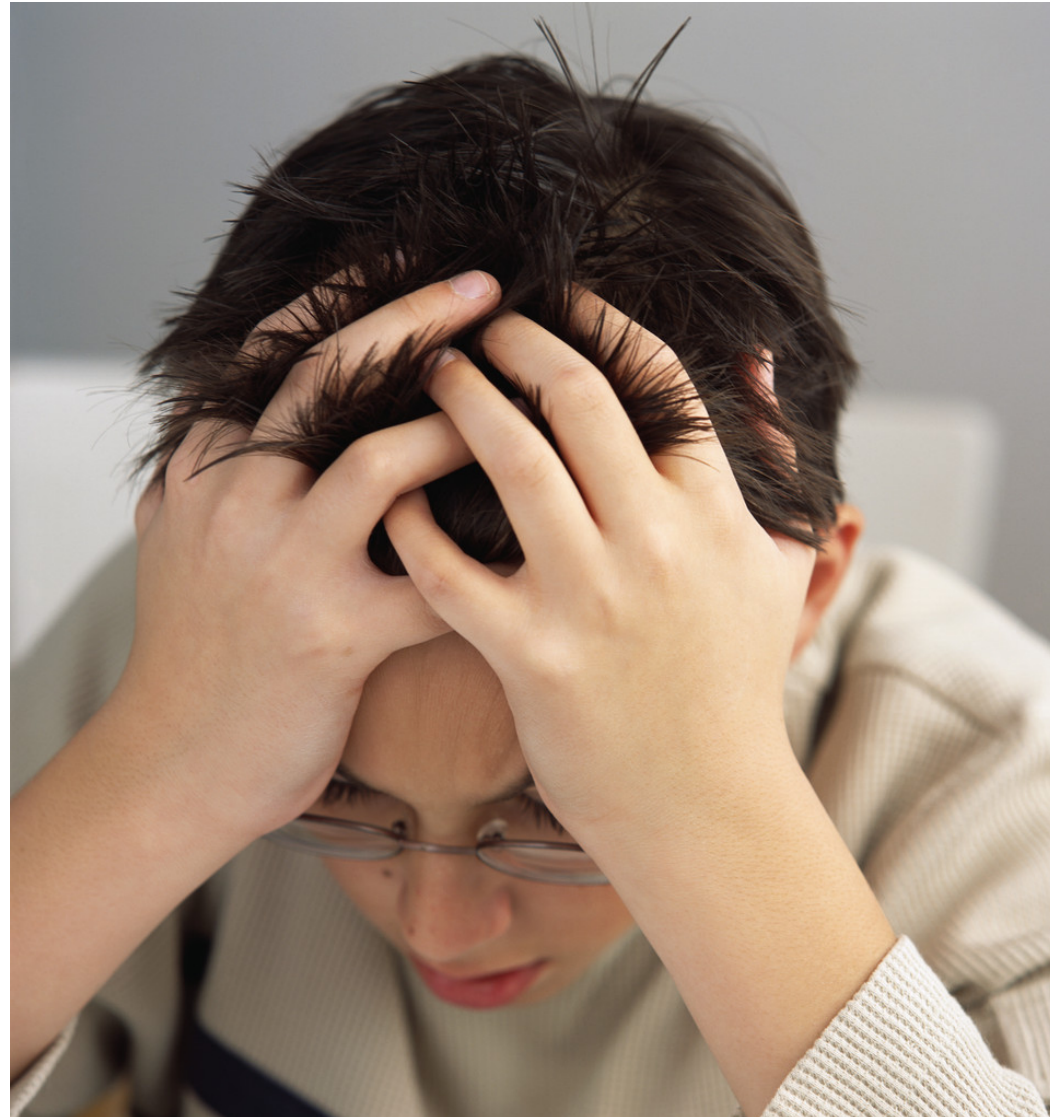
Bair-Merritt, M. H. et al. Pediatrics 2006;117:e278-e290
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IPV and children's mental health

Exposure to IPV increased risk of:

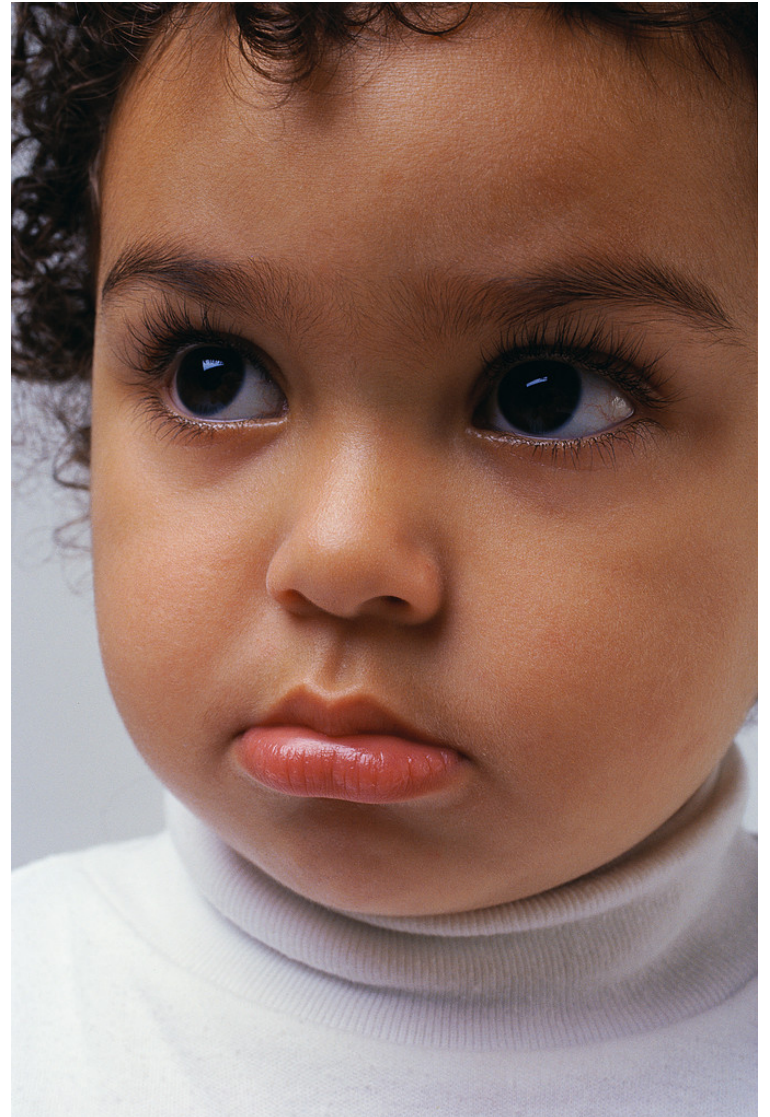
- ❑ Aggression, anxiety or inattention
- ❑ Suspension from school for disruptive or delinquent behavior
- ❑ If child was abused, suspension for aggressive behavior
- ❑ Risk-taking and health-adverse behaviors as adolescents or adults:
 - Sexually risky
 - Substance abuse



IPV and children's physical health

- Direct injury

- Indirect harms from exposure
 - Less well documented
 - Lower immunization rates



Effect of IPV on children's health



Poverty and housing

Effects on children's health



- Poor children are twice as likely to live in homes:
 - with leaking roof or broken windows
 - with holes in floor, cracks in walls
 - with roaches, rats
 - in neighborhoods with crime, litter, trash



Poverty and housing

Mold and asthma

- One 2001 study of low-income children (below 200% FPL) ages 4-12 with asthma found:
 - Visible mold and moldy smell in **50%** of homes
 - Cockroach infestation in nearly **20%** of homes

- *Exposure to Asthma Triggers in Homes of Low-Income Asthmatic Children*, University of Washington and Public Health Seattle King Co.
- www.riskworld.com/abstract/2001/SRAam01/ab01aa312.htm



Housing and children's health



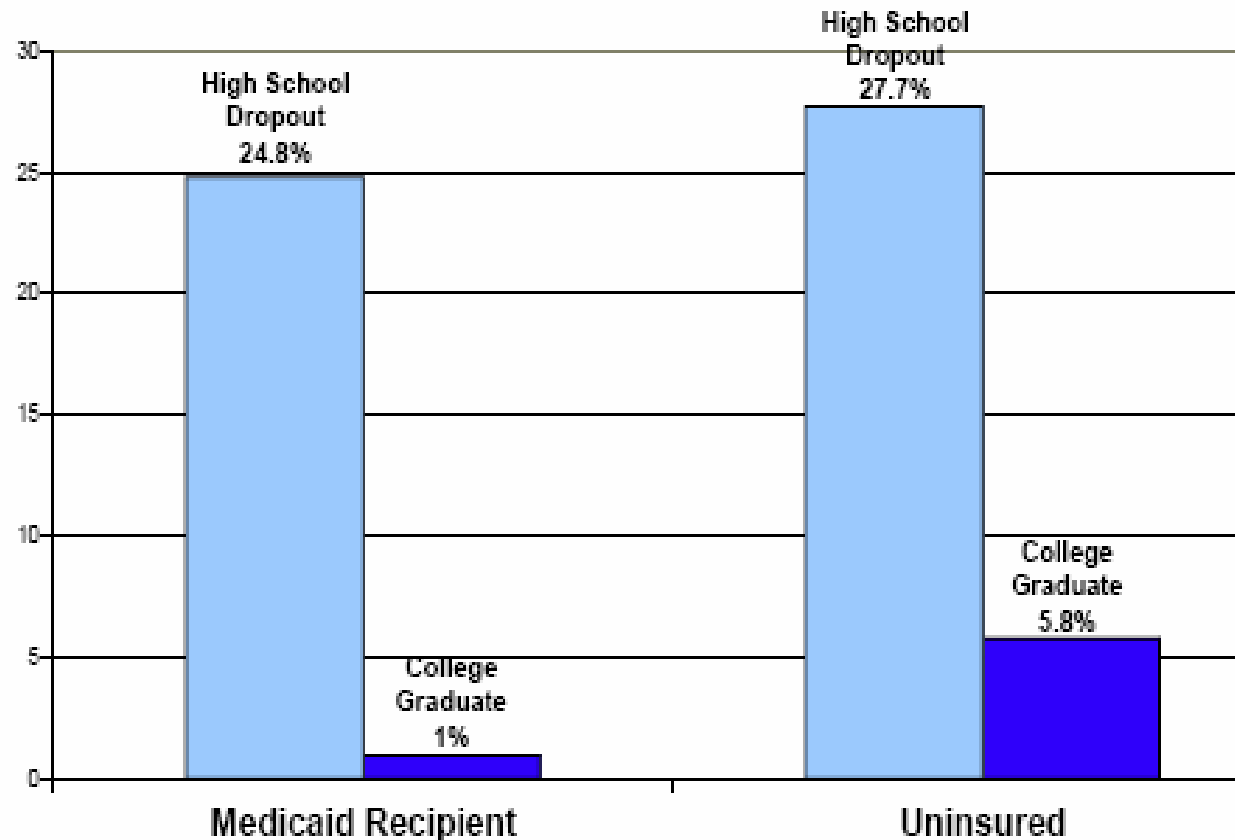
Poverty and education

Effects on children's health



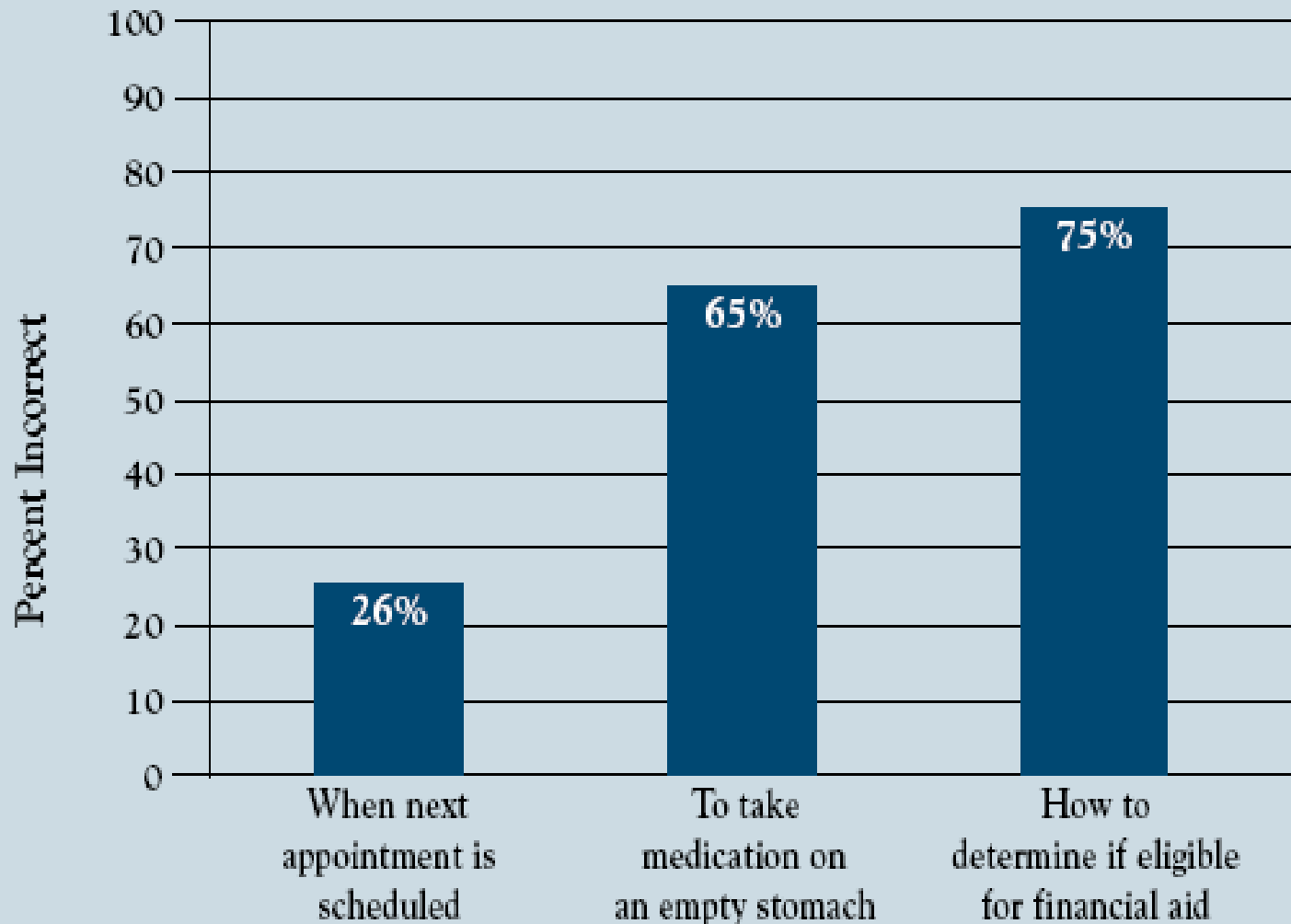
Educational attainment and health insurance

Medicaid Recipients and the Uninsured by Educational Attainment



□ Alliance for Excellent Education, "Healthier and Wealthier: Decreasing Healthcare Costs By Increasing Educational Attainment" (Issue Brief, Nov. 2006)

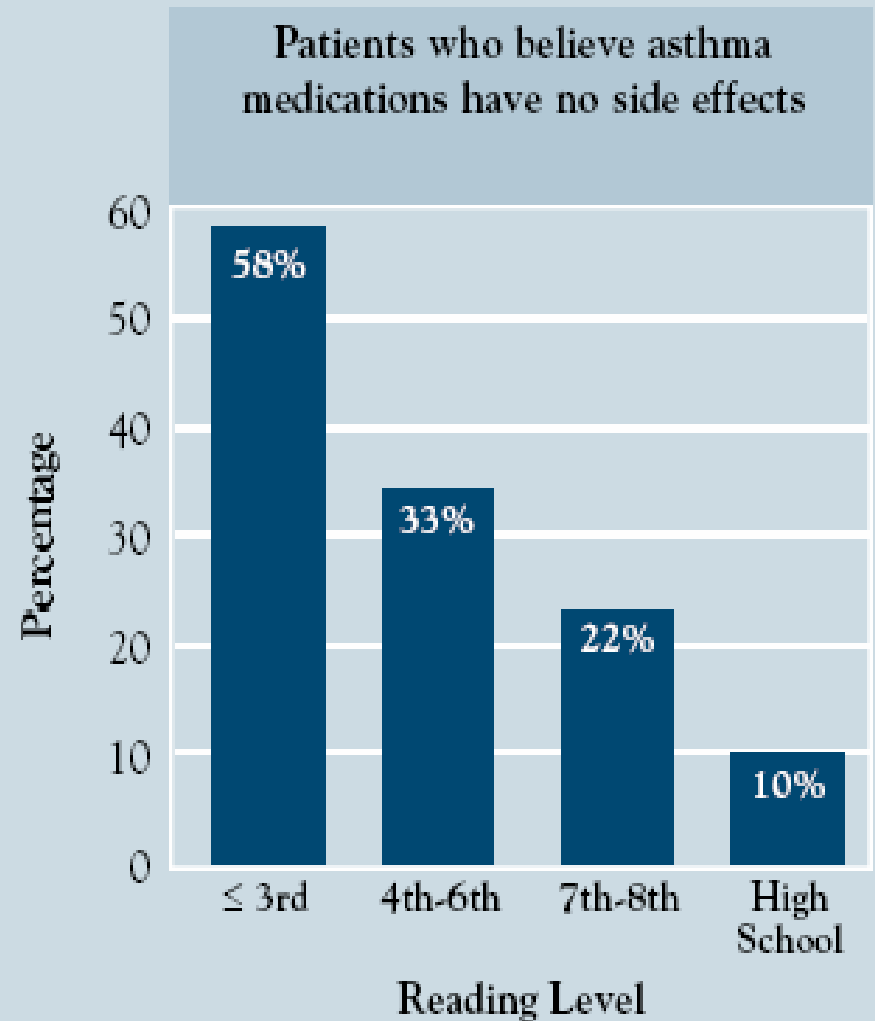
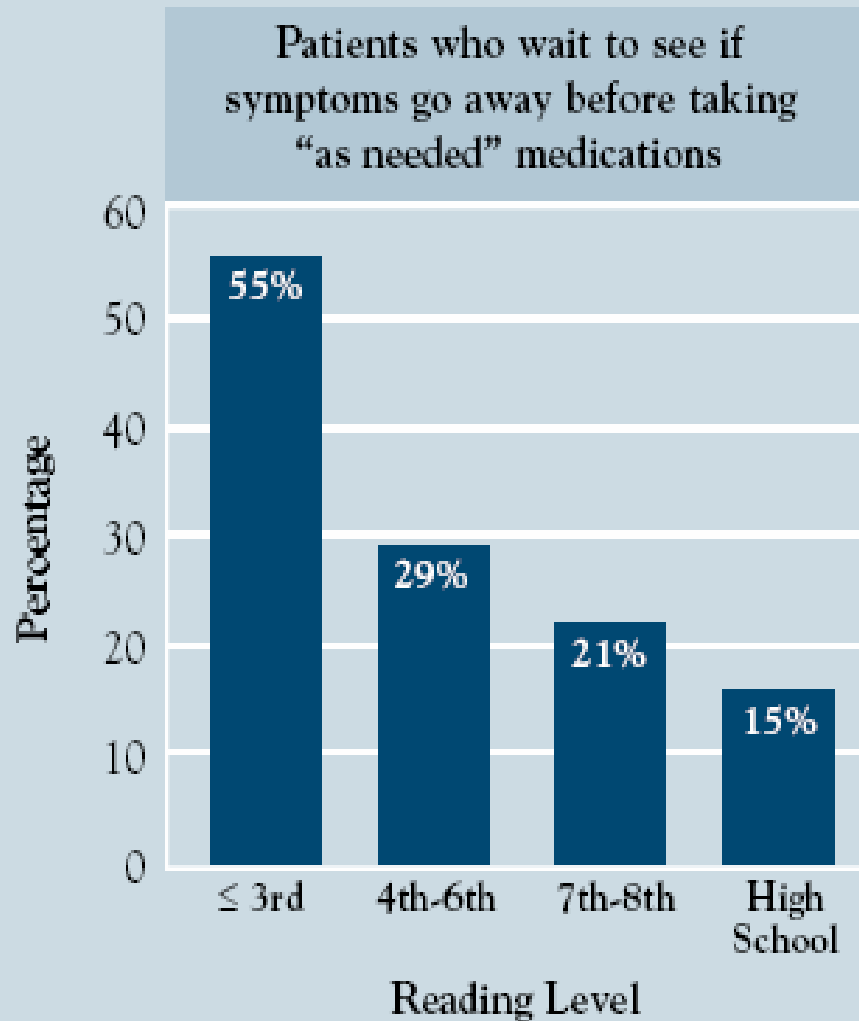
Many Public Hospital Patients* Do Not Understand Basic Health Care Information⁴



*% of 979 low-income patients

Source: Williams, et al., 1995.

Asthma Patients' Misunderstanding Regarding Medications⁶



Source: Williams, et al., 1998.

Education and children's health

- Accommodations for juvenile diabetes, sickle-cell disease, other health conditions
- Special education



Poverty and food insecurity

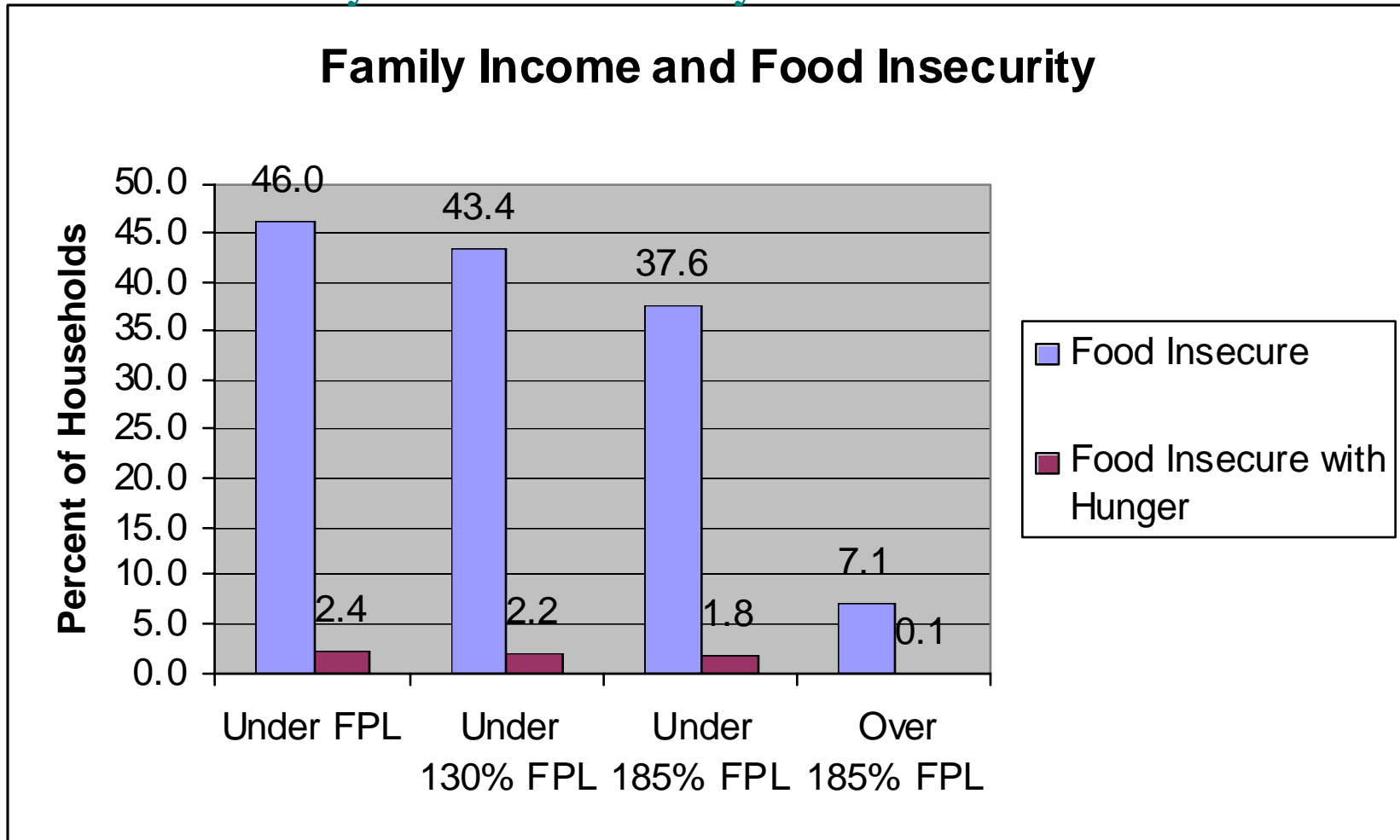
Effects on children's health



Poverty and food insecurity

Effects on children's health

Food insecurity is 5x more likely in families below 185% FPL



Nord et al., "Household Food Security in the US, 2005", USDA Economic Research Survey (2005)

Poverty and food insecurity

Effects on children's health

- Children in food-insufficient households suffer:
 - Poorer overall health status
 - More stomach and head aches
 - More colds

- Severe hunger in children is associated with:
 - Higher rate of chronic illness
 - More anxiety and depression
 - More behavioral problems

- Alaimo et al., "Food insufficiency, family income, and health in US preschool and school-aged children," *Am. J. Public Health* 91(5):781-6 (May 2001).
- Weinreb et al., "Hunger: Its Impact on Children's Health and Mental Health, *Pediatrics* 110:41 (2002)

Food insecurity & children's health

- What HeLP can do for families:
 - Food pantry
 - TANF
 - Food stamps
 - Other income supports



Addressing the socio-economic determinants of health

- ❑ Lawyers can address many poverty-related health issues:
- ❑ Domestic violence
- ❑ Special education needs
- ❑ Health care coverage (Medicaid, SCHIP, private insurance)
- ❑ Employment
- ❑ Income supports
- ❑ Consumer
- ❑ Food stamps
- ❑ Housing



American Bar Association

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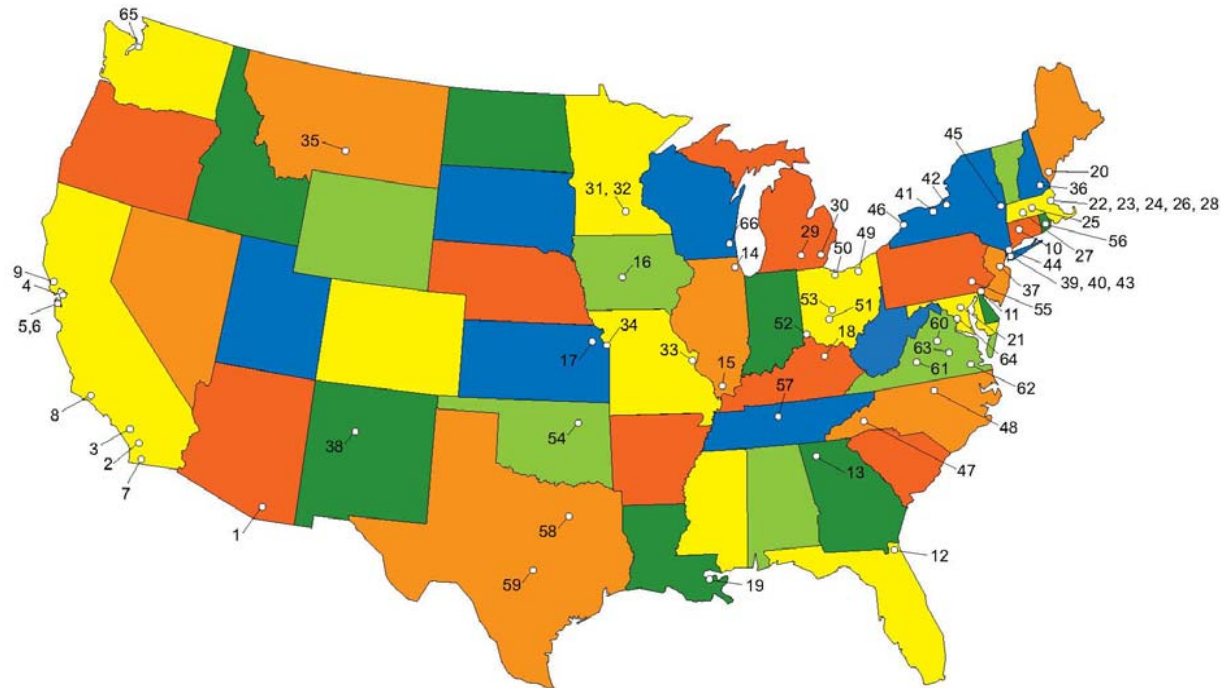
HEALTH LAW

Section of the ABA

The Medical  Legal Partnership for Children

RAISING THE BAR FOR CHILD HEALTH

Growing
national
trend



Medical-Legal Partnerships - September 2007

<http://mlpforchildren.org/Map.aspx>

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