

The United States government bases poverty on income and family size and the level is adjusted annually based on inflation. The United States is ranked as one of the highest rates for child poverty. With the cost of living rising in America, even both parents working isn't sufficient to keep them out of poverty. Some families have to commute two or more hours to work, so they have to spend more money on gas and sometimes car repairs. There are many reasons why families go into poverty such as pay cuts and job losses. One of the biggest reasons is the cost to raise children. People that are already struggling to meet their basic needs then have a child is the most significant financial consequence. Children born into poor families are disadvantaged by having parents with low levels of the qualities needed for acquiring income. Unfortunately, this means the child will grow up with instability and deprivation of basic needs. Children in poverty will most likely attend under resourced schools, poor and unsafe neighborhoods, experience health issues and become involved in the child welfare and criminal justice systems. Not only does the lack of resources stress the adults but the children suffer greatly. As seen in "Poor Kids," the children talked about several stressors they experience. Children in poverty don't get to have the "normal" kid life. They have to grow up fast. Several do not finish high school because they have no way of getting to school or they have to get a job and help pay bills and buy groceries. They stress about where they are going to sleep that night, or where they are going to live. The children are malnourished. The families do not have enough money to buy groceries, or if they do, they have to buy canned foods or processed foods with no nutritional value because it is cheaper. Majority of the children do not meet their caloric needs. They are still hungry after a meal, but some have taught their minds how to think about something else. The children suffer emotionally as well. Some get bullied about their clothes. In the videos I watched, they all talked about how they were embarrassed they were homeless or lived in their vehicles and didn't want their peers finding out. Even with resources available, some families do not want to reach out for help because they fear CPS will take their children away. Furthermore, many homeless shelters do not have availability, or some families have to

be split up. After watching the TED talk “Nadine Burke Harris: How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime” and the video on brain development from Harvard University, I learned that childhood trauma has an effect on early brain development, immune system, hormonal systems and the way DNA is read and transcribed. Children born into poverty and persistently living in poor conditions are at risk for many health and developmental challenges throughout their lives. The effects of persistent poverty can lead to toxic stress and can alter the way a young child’s brain develops, which can lead to lower educational accomplishment and higher rates of crime, adolescent pregnancy, and substance abuse. However, there are neurological reasons why people are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior and poor choices. It is due to adverse child experiences which include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect; parental mental illness, substance dependence, incarceration; parental separation and domestic violence. There is a relationship between adverse childhood experiences and health outcomes. The higher the adverse childhood experiences the more chronic health risks than a person with zero adverse childhood experiences. Exposure to early adversity affects different parts of the brain. It affects the pleasure and reward center of the brain that is implicated in substance dependence, it inhibits the prefrontal cortex which is necessary for impulse control and executive function critical to learning, and on MRI scans there is measurable differences in the brain’s fear response center. Even if a person doesn’t engage in risky behavior, people who have experienced childhood trauma are at a triple increase risk for heart disease and lung cancer. In my future practice, I will closely listen for adverse childhood affects spoken by patients. I can plan an interdisciplinary team to help the patient. I also know some children need other resources than just medication. I can educate the patient and parents about adverse childhood effects. Adverse childhood effects are more common than what we think. To conclude, I have realized that everyone is battling an issue. Children may look fine, but I do not know what their home life is like. I didn’t realize that having the basic human needs such as water. nutrition, healthcare, clothing, food and a place to

live is a blessing. I will be more observant about signs of lack of basic needs and try to find resources or help with what I can.