

**TITLE:** Best Babies Zone Portland: Housing as a Social Determinant of Health

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**PRESENTER(S):** Nick Sauvie

**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** No

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** All public health professionals, including policy makers, program developers, evaluators, and researchers.

**ABSTRACT:** The shortage of affordable housing affects communities throughout Oregon. Epigenetics explains the cost of toxic stress from housing instability on families with expecting parents and babies. Best Babies Zone is a national initiative working in nine cities nationwide to reduce racial disparities in maternal, child, and family health. In Portland, ROSE Community Development is partnering with eight community-based and culturally-specific organizations to place families into two new affordable housing developments. Best Babies Zone is a community-driven initiative to improve social determinants of health in the 97266 zip code of southeast Portland. This neighborhood is currently experiencing rapid gentrification, leading to rent increases and evictions for many moderate-income families. In communities that face constant challenges such as limited economic opportunity and chronic stress, health care alone is not enough to overcome the cumulative effects these factors have on one's health, including the risk of negative birth outcomes. Reducing preventable, unfair, and unjust inequities in birth outcomes requires increasing protective factors such as housing and reducing risk factors that lead to chronic stress and poor health.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Explain the Best Babies Zone maternal, child, and family health initiative. Describe the conditions facing families in the zone and their effects on public health. Explain the affordable housing development process in Oregon. Describe the Baby Booster housing preference system for families with expecting parents and children under age two. Discuss the expected benefits to families. Evaluate the success of the project to date.

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