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March_2006.pdf



Human Early Learning Partnership



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
HELP is an interdisciplinary research institute
within the Faculty of Graduate Studies



Child and Youth Developmental Trajectories Research Unit [CYDTRU]

Mission Statement

To create and maintain a population-based, person-specific, longitudinal Child & Youth Developmental Trajectories Database that will support and promote opportunities for world class interdisciplinary research into the factors that support or undermine children's language, cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development from the prenatal period through to early adulthood.

Summary

The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) is a collaborative, inter-university research institute whose mission is to create, promote and apply new knowledge through leading interdisciplinary research to help children thrive. The Child & Youth Developmental Trajectories Research Unit (CYDTRU), an emerging research unit within HELP, is developing a program of research that will track children's development over time and extend our knowledge on the modifiable differences in child development across a population. Through a series of coordinated research activities, CYDTRU will investigate how variations in children's health and social environments influence and affect development over the lifecourse.

CYDTRU's research program will help "explain" the emergence of systematic differences in child development that HELP has identified across neighbourhoods and other subpopulations in BC, and will contribute to understanding what modifications can be made to children's environments that will lead to positive and optimal developmental influences. This research will produce new insights and knowledge that will support and promote policies, effective interventions and evidence-based practices, and lead to sustained improvement in the lives and health of infants, children and youth in Canada.

CYDTRU is funded by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research – Research Unit Infrastructure Support Program.

Child & Youth Developmental Trajectories

The foundation of CYDTRU is the construction of a series of project-specific trajectories utilizing linkable health, child development (school readiness), education, community resource and socio-demographic data. These databases will enable research projects that can trace individual developmental trajectories (anonymized) from conception to high school leaving, across various facets of the health, social and educational systems for all children in BC.

Data available for trajectory construction:

- Birth record, health services, and socio-economic data – from the BC Linked Health Database.
- Standardized school readiness (Early Development Instrument - EDI), socio-demographic and community asset data by neighbourhood – from HELP.
- Student level information (on behaviour and achievement) – from Edudata Canada.

- ◆ Perinatal data – from the BC Reproductive Care Program.
- ◆ Provincial children-in-care data.
- ◆ Provincial child care data.

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CYDTRU researchers are working in collaboration to identify and create additional data sets that will enhance the current stock of trajectories data, including mental health data; child, youth and family health data from community surveys; child injury data; physiologic (stress) data from Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC; and pharmacological data from PharmaNet.

Program of Research

CYDTRU's interdisciplinary research team is currently developing research applications for provincial and national funding to develop and expand the number of population-based person-specific databases and to conduct research projects. Access to these databases will be provided to bona fide researchers under access policies which operate under Section 35 of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.

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Key research questions include:

- ◆ How do developmental trajectories from pregnancy to high school graduation/leaving differ across neighbourhoods and communities, according to social, economic, and environmental conditions?
- ◆ What are the characteristics of neighbourhoods and communities where developmental trajectories are more favourable than would be predicted on the basis of socioeconomic determinants of child development? Which intervention programs in those communities (e.g. child care, preschool), if any, have helped modify the developmental trajectories of infants and children and influence levels of achievement in the early and middle school years?
- ◆ To what extent are educational attainment scores in the early grades a reflection of social and familial support, physical and mental health and health care experience in the early years of life?
- ◆ How do health and mental health problems contribute to differences in development, and how do socioeconomic and other differences contribute to differences in health and mental health?
- ◆ To what extent do early life experiences alter brain and biological development? How does brain and biological development differ across neighbourhoods with different patterns of cognitive, social and emotional development; and across neighbourhoods that differ in dietary patterns, social cohesion and socioeconomic characteristics?

CYDTRU FUNDING

With funding from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, CYDTRU will receive core infrastructure support through to July 2008 to bring together a cohesive group of researchers with a shared focused on child and youth developmental trajectories research, and to enhance the ability of researchers in the unit to qualify for additional peer review funding.

For more information please contact:

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