

BREAK THE CYCLE 13

BREAK THE CYCLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

Reducing Children's Environmental Health Disparities and Promoting Health Equity for all Children

Overview, Guidelines and Timeline for Break the Cycle 13

Break the Cycle is a collaborative interdisciplinary research and training program involving graduate and undergraduate university students in academic tracks that focus on the impact of social, economic and environmental factors on children's health. The target populations are stressed communities where environmental hazards are related to circumstances of social and economic disadvantage. **Each student is required to develop a project that improves the health of vulnerable children who live in these communities.** At the end of the project period the students will present their studies and their findings at a national conference and will be required to write papers on their projects which will then be published in an international journal. Our budget allows us to provide for travel and lodging to the student and mentor for the annual conference and a modest stipend for the student on completion of the project.

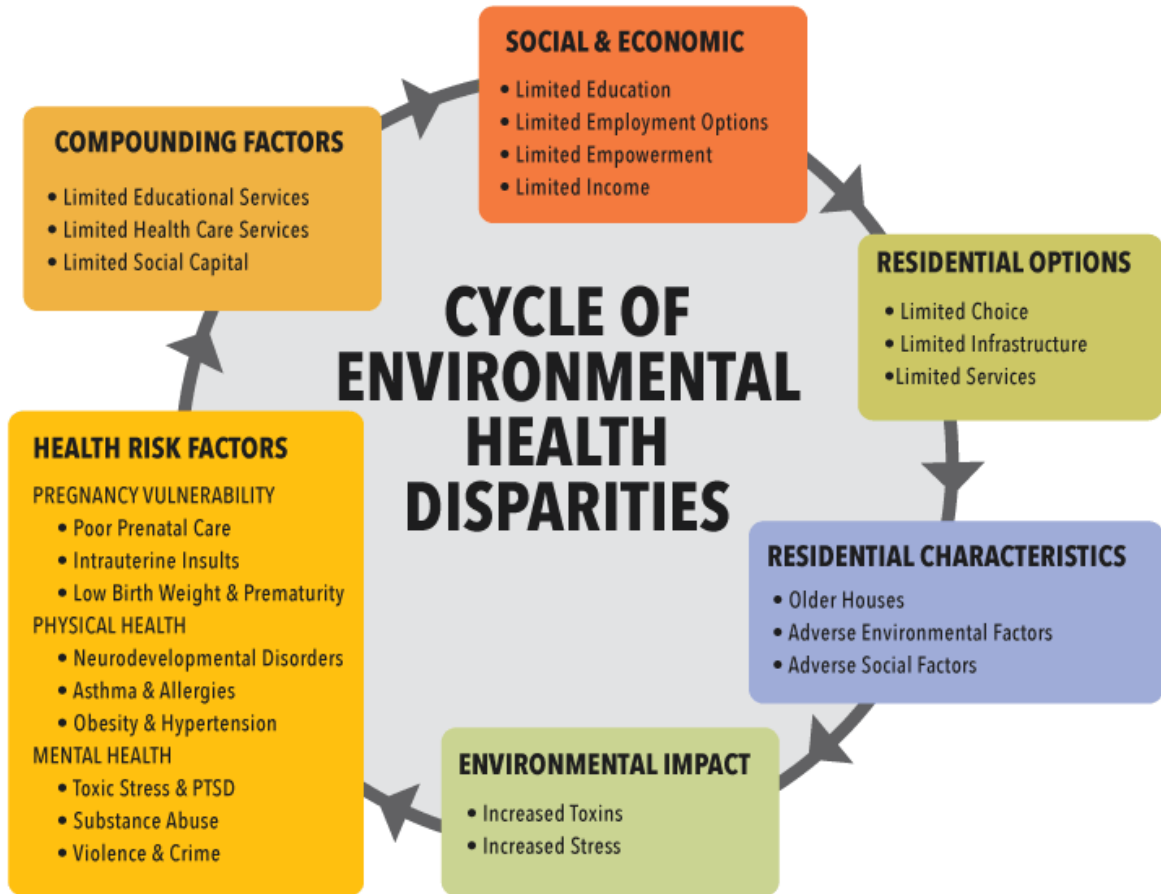
Environmental Health Disparities

The diagram below represents how adverse social and economic factors may play out in the environment of a child and the impact that it has on health, development, education and future for the children in low income, underserved and minority communities. Substantial evidence, across a variety of academic and public policy areas, supports the relationships and patterns depicted in the diagram. This is the societal challenge of the *Cycle of Children's Environmental Health Disparities*. We feel that even the smallest positive change can make a big difference for an individual, for a family and for a community – indeed, the expectation is that the student projects will have a ripple effect not only on the communities, but also on the careers of the students to prepare them to be better stewards and leaders of our collective future.

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Project Guidelines

- Students are required to work with their university faculty mentors to develop projects that address **environmental factors that adversely affect the health of children living in communities of poverty and generate strategies to *Break the Cycle* and improve the health and well-being for the children.**
- During the project period there will be monthly conference calls to monitor the progress of the research projects, share ideas and assure that the project is on track and consistent with the spirit of the *Break the Cycle* concept. These conference calls are a requirement for all students and their mentors.
- At the end of the project period, the students will have an opportunity to present their projects at a conference in Atlanta which will be open to the public and includes a keynote speaker of national stature.
- The students are expected to write papers on their projects which will be submitted for publication in an international journal as a monograph of the Break the Cycle projects. The papers will also be published as chapters in a book of student Break the Cycle projects.
- Mentors will be responsible for reviewing the first draft of the student work and submitting it to the PEHSU on behalf of the student.
- Funding of travel expenses and accommodation will be provided for the student and faculty mentor.
- The progress and careers of the participating students will be tracked to evaluate the impact of their participation in the Break the Cycle Program on their academic or professional careers.

Desired Outcomes

- To inspire students from a variety of academic disciplines to explore the relationship between adverse social, economic and environmental factors and the health and development of children and to creatively generate strategies to address the challenges.
- To collaborate with an interdisciplinary team of academic leaders from different universities and colleges to creatively examine the broader issues of this topic
- To promote leadership and foster a lifelong professional network among the students
- To encourage faculty of our university partners to promote academic interest and social awareness in in *Children's Environmental Health Disparities*

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Tentative Timeline of Activity: September 2017 through June 2018

2017

September	Announce Break the Cycle 13 to university faculty to invite students to submit proposals
September 20	Deadline to submit abstract for consideration
October 9	Announcement of acceptance of proposals
November 3	1 st conference call will take place (8:30-10:00am) Review project topics & expectations of program Monthly conference calls will be scheduled
December 8	2 nd conference call will take place (8:30-10:00am) Students finalize description of project

2018

Jan - Feb	Required monthly conference calls with students and their mentors to review progress – exact dates TBA
March	Students submit PowerPoint presentation for review – date TBA
April 23-24	Conference held in Atlanta
June 30	Completion of 1 st draft of papers for publication
July 31	Completion of Project

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Theme of Break the Cycle 13

Envisioning Community Based Solutions to Environmental Health Disparities

Children and their families who live in poverty are more likely to live in areas where there is more pollution and other adverse environmental factors that aggravate poor health and drain the communities of energy to make a difference; consequently, they become trapped in a negative cycle of health disparities.

Although communities have agency to promote health equity, community-based solutions require supportive public and private policies at all levels as well as financial and practical resources to facilitate community action. The collaboration and engagement of new and diverse partners is essential to promoting positive change in breaking the cycle of environmental health disparities and promoting health equity; health equity is crucial for the well-being and vibrancy of communities. (see diagram below)

The inspiration for this theme came from the history of Proctor Creek, a waterway that was once a playground and even food source for local neighborhoods in Atlanta. As a result of multiple social, economic, and political factors, surrounding neighborhoods became poor and suffered neglect and degradation over time; as a consequence the creek became polluted with increased bacterial counts, poisoned fish, and debris which are affronts to all senses and to human health and community sustainability.

The good news is that with a community effort, political will and economic investment, this situation is finally being turned around and nature and vibrancy are returning to the area. Our focus will be on how and why the pollution happens in the poor communities, what it takes to make a positive change, and the benefits and unintended consequences that result.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. Communities in action: Pathways to health equity. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/24624

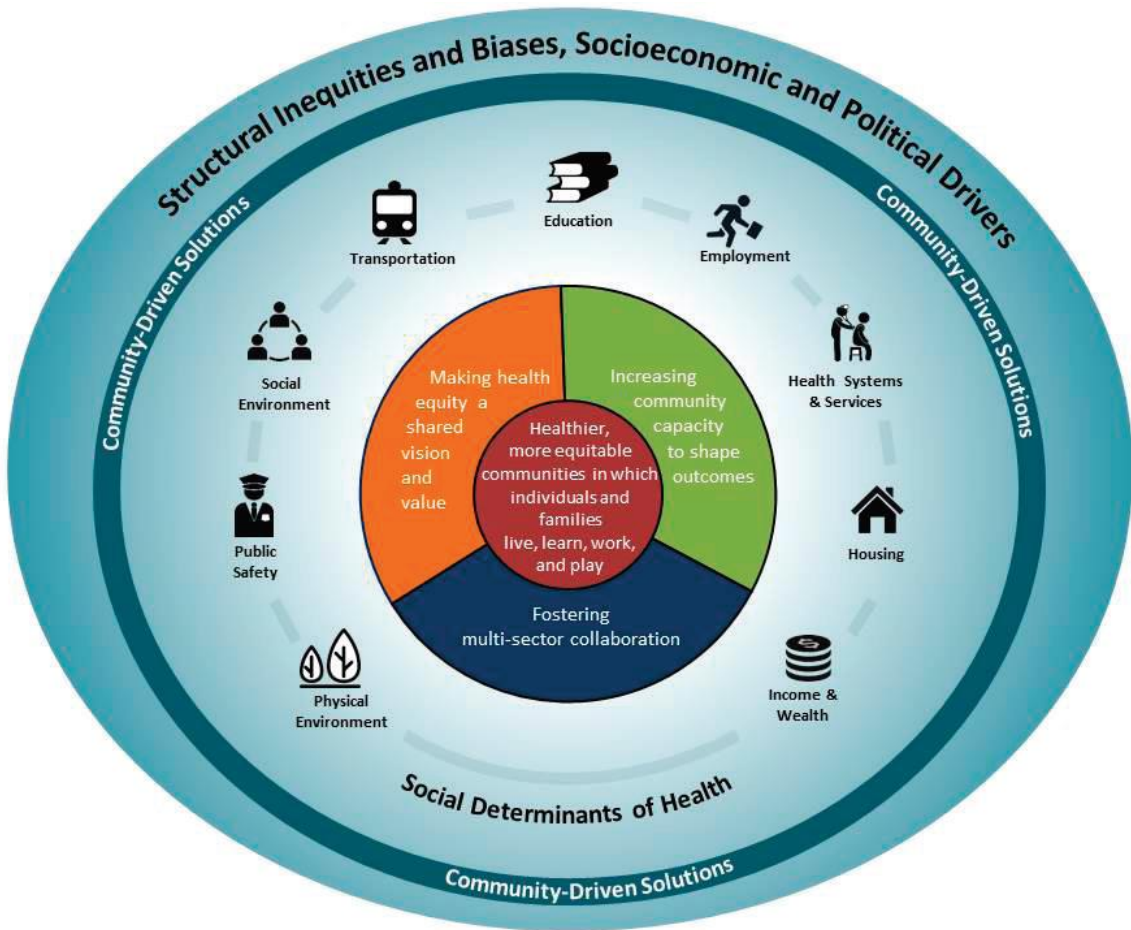
EPA Proctor Creek Watershed/Atlanta (Georgia)

<https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/proctor-creek-watershedatlanta-georgia>

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