

Interventions can cut socioeconomic inequities in child mental health

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Intervening in parental mental health and preschool attendance can go

some way to reducing socioeconomic inequities in children's mental health problems, according to a study published online April 3 in *Pediatrics*.

Sharon Goldfeld, Ph.D., from the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, and colleagues used [data](#) from the national representative birth cohort of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children with 5,107 participants to examine the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage at age 0 to 1 year on children's [mental health problems](#) at age 10 to 11 years. The extent to which inequities in children's mental health problems could be reduced by improving disadvantaged children's parental mental health and their preschool attendance was estimated using an interventional effects approach.

The researchers found that compared with their nondisadvantaged peers, disadvantaged children had a higher prevalence of elevated mental health symptoms (32.8 versus 18.7 percent; confounder-adjusted difference in prevalence, 11.6 percent). Overall, 6.5 and 0.3 percent of the socioeconomic differences in child mental health problems could be reduced by improving disadvantaged children's parental mental health and their preschool attendance, respectively (equivalent to absolute reductions of 0.8 and 0.04 percent, respectively). A 10.8 percent higher prevalence of elevated symptoms would remain for disadvantaged children if these interventions were delivered in combination.

"Maximum impact on child mental health inequities will nevertheless likely require a multisectoral and sustained strategy, stacking diverse types of complementary services over [childhood](#), including those addressing disadvantage itself (e.g., family income support), together with strategies such as improved parental support and preschool provision," the authors write.

More information: Sharon Goldfeld et al, Addressing Child Mental

Health Inequities Through Parental Mental Health and Preschool Attendance, *Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2022-057101](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-057101)

Jessica Young et al, Early Childhood Investments to Improve the Mental Health of Disadvantaged Youth, *Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2022-060264](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-060264)

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