

Diapering: A Daily Struggle for Families Experiencing Homelessness

15,000. That is the average number of diapers dispensed monthly, at no charge to families, to parents of young children staying at People Serving People. Infants typically require about 240 diapers a month, at an approximate cost of \$72, which is not covered by two key federal benefits provided to families and children, SNAP (food stamps) and WIC (supplemental nutrition benefits for women, infants, and children).

Lacking resources to buy needed diapers was found to be a leading cause of mental health problems among new moms in a peer-reviewed study of pregnant and parenting women, cited in a recent article in *The Atlantic* magazine (July 21, 2015). Study participants were asked, *"If you have children in diapers, do you ever feel that you do not have enough diapers to change them as often as you would like?"* Almost 30% of participants responded "yes."

The study found that an insufficient diaper supply sometimes leads to "stretching" diapers by changing them less frequently. This can cause diaper dermatitis or urinary tract infections, as well as a diminishing maternal sense of competence and increasing maternal stress, which can ultimately lead to negative impacts on child health and development. As one mother said, *"My self-esteem plummets. I can't soothe my baby because I can't put a clean diaper on my baby."* Studies have shown that children whose parents have high levels of stress or depression are at greater risk of social, emotional, and behavioral problems.

The study concludes that families' access to an adequate diaper supply "may prove to be a tangible way of reducing parenting stress and increasing parenting sense of competency, enabling parents to be more sensitive with their children, and thereby improving parenting quality and overall child outcomes."

This holiday season as you plan a giving drive with family, friends, or colleagues, consider doing a diaper and baby wipes drive. Last year, Delta Dental of Minnesota challenged its employees to collect a month's worth of diapers for the children staying at People Serving People, rewarding individuals and teams who collected the most diapers at the lowest cost per diaper; they achieved 200% of their goal.

We are most in need of diaper sizes 4, 5, 6, and pull-ups. Diaper donations are accepted at any time. Contact Tom Golembeck at tgolembeck@peopleservingpeople.org if you are planning a diaper drive. Thank you for supporting the health of our youngest guests and their parents.

