

Linking Cash Aid and Children's Brain Development

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The Alliance for Patient Access (allianceforpatientaccess.org), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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Can a cash subsidy to parents improve their babies' brain development? Possibly so, according to [new research](#). (1)

More Money, More Brain Activity

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It remains to be seen whether the brain activity patterns of the first group of babies will lead to stronger cognitive skills like problem-solving, thinking, and planning. However, other studies have shown them to be associated. Conversely, poverty in early child-

hood has been linked with lower school achievement and educational attainment, as well as poor health outcomes and reduced earnings as an adult.

“If I was a policymaker,” noted one consultant to the study, “I'd pay attention to this.”

Reviving the Expanded Child Tax Credit

News of this study and the potential benefit of an unrestricted cash payment has already made its way to Capitol Hill. There, White House officials and members of Congress continue to debate the [Build Back Better Act](#), (2) which includes several provisions aimed at improving infant and [maternal health](#). (3) President Joe Biden is also pushing to revive the temporarily expanded child tax credit, which expired December 15, 2021.

Under the more robust program, child tax credits that previously had been distributed as part of the annual tax refund process were converted to monthly payments. Eligibility was also expanded, and the maximum benefit was increased. Families could receive up to \$3,600 annually per child younger than age six and up to \$3,000 annually per child six and older.

Safety Net Policies and Children's Health

Additional research is necessary, but the suggestion that an increased family income could improve long-term outcomes across children's lifespan is worth considering. However, it may not be a reason to jump at extending near-universal subsidies for children. The total investment for the expanded child tax credit was more than \$100 billion for one year.

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The debate over poverty and policy solutions isn't going away, but these data are intriguing to the conversation.

References:

1. <https://www.pnas.org/content/119/5/e2115649119>
2. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376/text>
3. <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/maternal-health-in-the->

[build-back-better-act/](#)

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