



EXPLORING  
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

# BREAK THE CYCLE 16

OF CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES  
PROMOTING HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL CHILDREN

The Southeast Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (SE PEHSU) and Break the Cycle of Health Disparities, Inc. invites university students from a variety of disciplines to participate in our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual *Break the Cycle of Children's Environmental Health Disparities* program 2020-2021 that focuses on social, economic and environmental influences on children's health, growth and development.

Children who grow up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage are at greater risk for exposure to adverse environmental factors and are more likely to suffer adverse health and developmental consequences. *Break the Cycle* supports an interdisciplinary set of student-driven research projects that explore the environmental social, and economic factors that adversely affect children's health and well-being, and creatively develop strategies to promote improved health for all children and, thereby, *Break the Cycle of Environmental Health Disparities* (see diagram below).

Students are required to work with academic mentors from their respective university to submit a proposal on how they would develop a project to *Break the Cycle*. All proposals will be reviewed, and a limited number will be selected based on relevance to the cycle of children's environmental health disparities, feasibility, creativity, , and strength of the project plan. Those selected will have the opportunity to work with the *Break the Cycle* faculty and with other students from around the country and internationally, to complete their project and present findings at an annual virtual conference via Zoom scheduled for the spring of 2021. There will be monthly conference calls to review projects and provide perspectives and guidance. During these calls, faculty and students will have the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with their counterparts in other disciplines at other universities. Students will also be required to write a scientific paper on their project which will be published in an international peer-review journal as well as a chapter in a book.

Since the inception of the Break the Cycle program in 2004-2005, have we partnered with over 40 different university departments in 12 States in the USA as well as internationally, and have supported research for over 120 students. We have had 11 monographs published in international journals and 11 books. In 2012 we conducted a survey of past students who rated their experience with *Break the Cycle* valuable, and many continued to pursue careers related to their *Break the Cycle* projects.

#### BREAK THE CYCLE FACULTY

I. Leslie Rubin, MD  
Robert J. Geller, MD  
Claire Coles PhD  
Abby Mutic, PhD, CNM  
Victoria Green, MD  
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Visit us at:  
[www.breakthecycleprogram.org](http://www.breakthecycleprogram.org)

Project applications and abstracts are due **September 30th, 2020**. Proposals will be reviewed and decisions of the panel will be communicated to all applicants by **October 9th, 2020**. We look forward to working with students and their mentors on the 16<sup>th</sup> annual *Break the Cycle* program and making this year another great success.

Please contact me at [lrubi01@emory.edu](mailto:lrubi01@emory.edu) or our Project Coordinator, Nathan Mutic at [nathan.mutic@emory.edu](mailto:nathan.mutic@emory.edu) and we will be happy answer any questions you have or discuss potential projects with you.

Please visit our website <https://www.breakthecycleprogram.org/> to learn about past programs and see enclosed guidelines for further information.

*Best wishes for success,*

*Leslie Rubin*

Leslie Rubin, MD  
Director, Break the Cycle Program  
Co-director, Southeast PEHSU, Emory University  
Founder, Break the Cycle of Health Disparities, Inc.  
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Morehouse School of Medicine  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Emory University School of Medicine  
Atlanta, GA

### **Project Guidelines**

- University faculty identify students who have an interest in this topic area and encourage and support the student in the selection of an idea for research. Alternatively, students may initiate a project and identify a mentor. We specifically look for projects that address **environmental, economic, or social factors that adversely affect the health of children living in poverty**.
- During the project period there are 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 mentors.
- At the end of the project period, the students present their projects at a conference in Atlanta, which will be open to the public and includes a keynote speaker of national stature. Note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic we will host a virtual conference in the event it is not safe to travel to Atlanta.
- Students are expected to write papers on their projects which are submitted for publication in an international journal as a monograph of the *Break the Cycle* projects.
- Funding of travel expenses and accommodation is provided for the student and faculty mentor.
- The progress and careers of the participating students are tracked to evaluate the impact of their participation in the *Break the Cycle* program on their academic or professional careers.

### **Eligibility**

- Trainees of all disciplines and levels are encouraged to apply. This includes undergraduates, graduate students, medical residents, and fellows.
- All applicants must have a faculty mentor from their institution.

### **Desired Outcomes**

- To inspire students from a variety of academic disciplines to explore the relationship between adverse environmental, economic, and social 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 landscape of this topic.
- To promote leadership among the students.
- To encourage faculty of our university partners to promote academic interest and social awareness of *Children's Environmental Health Disparities*.

### **Application Instructions**

- Complete the [online application](#)
- Submit an abstract of your proposal for Break the Cycle Program (500 words max) describing the project and how it will Break the Cycle of Children's Environmental Health Disparities. The abstract should include relevant background information, the aim or hypothesis of the project, proposed methods, and feasibility.
- While letters of support are not required, they can be submitted via email to nathan.mutic@emory.edu. Please include "BTC 16 LOS" in the subject line of the email.

**Theme for Break the Cycle 16 Symposium: COVID 19 and Children’s Health Disparities**

COVID 19 has infected over 2 million people in the USA and killed over 150,000. Examination of those who are disproportionately affected clearly points to vulnerable populations such individuals living in low-income communities and some minority groups. This symposium will explore the patterns of illness among populations and use the knowledge gained to develop strategies to reduce health disparities and promote health equity for all children.

