Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

How DACA Impacted Child Health in 200 Words

Health Equity

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Every time I see patients, I see the impact that social determinants, including safe, stable and supportive environments, can have on a child's health and their family's overall well-being. We need a permanent mechanism to ensure that all children in the U.S. – whether they were born here or brought here by their families – can grow up healthy, contributing to their families and our country.

Understanding this, it is clear to me that the White House decision to terminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) will significantly impact children's health. DACA granted certain undocumented teens and young adults who came to this country as children temporary permission to live and work here. Since starting in 2012, DACA has provided reprieve for nearly 800,000 young people.

Although DACA recipients are not eligible for benefits through Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act (ACA), DACA has nonetheless had a positive impact on child health. Increased educational and employment opportunities appear to have boosted insurance coverage among DACA recipients who can purchase it. Consistent with my experience as a pediatrician, DACA has also led to improvements in the psychological well-being of recipients and their children. Most recently, research showed young children of DACA-eligible mothers experienced mental illness at half the rate of those whose mothers were not DACA-eligible.

There will be much news coverage of the DACA termination, but the implications it has on the health and well-being of our nation's future should be at the forefront of the discussion.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Communications Manager Lauren

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