Looking Forward to the Launch of PolicyLab's New Behavioral Health Portfolio

Behavioral Health

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The theme for this year's Mental Health Month is fitness #4Mind4Body, meaning that health is all-inclusive and that we must care for our minds just as much as we care for our bodies. Here at PolicyLab, this message is deeply engrained in the way that we think about all of our work. We know that mental health problems affect one in five young people at any given time, and about two-thirds of those individuals are not getting the help they need. As health care providers and researchers, our faculty and staff are continually confronted with the impact that mental health has on the overall health and well-being of not only the children and families we serve directly, but the communities in which these families live.

We know that addressing a person's social, emotional, and mental health in addition to their physical health can lead to better health outcomes and savings in costs for patients, health systems and hospitals alike. For children this is even more palpable—approximately 75% of children with a mental health condition are seen in the pediatrician's office, not in specialized mental health settings. That means that our pediatric health care system is uniquely situated to identify children and adolescents with mental or behavioral health concerns. To truly improve care for children, we must increase the number and kinds of providers who can deliver preventive and treatment services and expand the settings in which these services are delivered—this includes schools, community programs and primary care. Increasing capacity in these settings allows for improvements in typical mental and physical health domains as well as nontraditional outcomes such as academic performance.

A Focus on Mental Health

Recognizing this opportunity and the importance of this topic, we're partnering with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences to launch a fifth PolicyLab portfolio later this year focused exclusively on behavioral health. Behavioral health has always been a critical part of our work here at PolicyLab—it's the only topic that currently spans all four thematic research

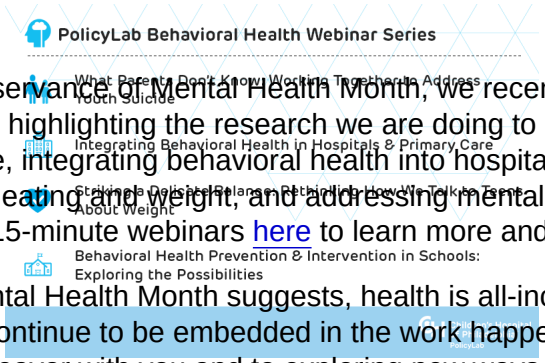
portfolios—and has continued to take shape as new behavioral health experts have joined our team. The addition of this portfolio will allow a multitude of researchers to look across the spectrum of mental and behavioral health and develop collaborations to enhance and augment this important work.

The mission of PolicyLab's new portfolio is to improve mental and behavioral health outcomes for children, adolescents, and their families through research and partnerships with clinicians, communities and policymakers. Our experts are deeply committed to understanding how to improve care for children and families regardless of where they access services, asking questions such as:

- How do we link children and families to care in an efficient and timely way?
- Where should children and families receive behavioral health care, and how do we ensure that the care is evidence-based?
- How can we work across systems to ensure the complex needs of each family are met?

In answering these questions, we hope to learn more about opportunities for prevention and health promotion and how to reduce disparities in access to care, and to identify where we can streamline how and where youth receive behavioral health services. Look out for the formal launch of this portfolio in September with the roll out of a new section on the PolicyLab website.

Explore New Behavioral Health Resources



As an early introduction to our work, and in observance of Mental Health Month, we recently released a webinar series tackling a variety of mental health topics highlighting the research we are doing to address key issues facing children and adolescents—youth suicide, integrating behavioral health into hospitals and primary care, having healthy conversations with teens about eating and weight, and addressing mental health needs in schools. You can access these pre-recorded, 15-minute webinars here to learn more and to listen in.

We know, and as the theme for this year's Mental Health Month suggests, health is all-inclusive; therefore, even with a home of its own, behavioral health will continue to be embedded in the work happening across PolicyLab. We look forward to sharing this endeavor with you and to exploring new ways to collaborate with our partners to ensure all kids and teens can be their healthiest selves both physically and mentally.

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