

Informing Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Health Equity Response

Statement of Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has not impacted all Americans equally. Many vulnerable and marginalized populations are at higher risk of exposure, severe illness, and death from the disease, as well as from indirect harms such as food insecurity and loss of health insurance coverage. PolicyLab experts have raised concerns related to the pandemic's [disparate effects](#) on racial and ethnic minorities, immigrant families, [children living in rural areas](#), the economically challenged, and those with [mental health](#) and [substance use disorders](#), among others. Policy and systems changes are urgently needed to address immediate disparities related to COVID-19, as well as the underlying issues that have created them.

Description

Informing Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Health Equity Response

Image

PolicyLab experts have raised concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic's disparate effects on:



racial & ethnic
minorities



immigrant families



children in
rural areas



mental health &
substance use disorders

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Our Health Equity Portfolio is working with Pennsylvania's Department of Health to develop recommendations for addressing health disparities related to COVID-19.

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The Pennsylvania Department of Health convened a COVID-19 Health Equity Response Team in April 2020. Diverse stakeholders from across the Commonwealth participated in subcommittees to develop recommendations for addressing health disparities. PolicyLab facilitated a subcommittee on economically-challenged individuals, low-wage workers and un- and underinsured populations. PolicyLab experts also joined a range of other subcommittees, including those related to pregnant women and parents of extremely young children, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, those with limited English proficiency, and rural Pennsylvanians. In addition to writing recommendations for the committee it facilitated, PolicyLab also drafted a recommendation that COVID-19 data collection should include metrics on preferred language.

All recommendations were finalized in June 2020 and were shared with Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine, the Lieutenant Governor's COVID-19 Task Force on Health Disparity and other key stakeholders. In addition to addressing concerns specific to COVID-19, many of the Health Equity Response Team's suggestions strive to address longer-term, underlying issues related to insurance coverage, access to health care and social determinants of health.

In November 2020, PolicyLab drafted a [white paper](#) sharing results of a survey that was conducted through this process among Pennsylvania stakeholders working with immigrant and limited English proficient populations. The white paper findings were summarized in a [blog post](#) in English, Spanish and French, as well as a [policy brief](#) that was shared widely with local, state, and national stakeholders who serve immigrant, refugee, and limited-English

proficient populations.

Next Steps

PolicyLab experts have continued their involvement with the Pennsylvania Department of Health in helping to implement the initial recommendations as well as informing its COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans.

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Related Tools & Publications

- [Addressing the Unique Needs of Immigrant and Limited-English-Proficient Communities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
[Policy Briefs](#)
Feb 2021
- [Supporting Immigrant Communities and Those with Limited English Proficiency During the Pandemic: Stakeholder Perspectives from Pennsylvania](#)
[Tools and Memos](#)
Nov 2020
- [FAQ: Support for Children with Special Educational Needs Amid COVID-19](#)
[Tools and Memos](#)
Aug 2020
- [Ensuring Support Services for Youth With Disabilities & Special Health Care Needs Amid COVID-19](#)
[Webinars](#)
Jul 2020
- [COVID-19 and Pennsylvania's Rural Kids](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Apr 27, 2020
- [COVID-19 and Mothers with Substance Use Disorders](#)
[Blog Post](#)
May 18, 2020
- [COVID-19: How Missing Milestones is Impacting Teen Mental Health](#)
[Blog Post](#)
May 05, 2020
- [COVID-19 Disparities and Impacts on Emotional Health & Well-being of Diverse Children](#)
[Blog Post](#)
May 13, 2020
- [Are Pediatricians Ready to Care for Immigrant Families in a Time of Crisis?](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Apr 16, 2020
- [Are Refugee Essential Workers at a Higher Risk of Contracting COVID-19?](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Mar 04, 2021
- [Thawing the Chill From Public Charge Will Take Time and Investment](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Apr 13, 2021
- [Pressing Issues Facing Children and Families: Reflections One Year into the Pandemic](#)
[Blog Post](#)
Apr 29, 2021
- [Utilizing Rapid Qualitative Assessment and Thematic Analysis Methods to Identify and Share Promising Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Practices with People in Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Communities During COVID-19](#)
[Article](#)
Jul 2024

Related Projects

[Responding to COVID-19](#)
[Population Health Sciences](#)