Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

PolicyLab Forum 2022: Behind the Scenes of Planning

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Are we crazy to plan an in-person event for next year? It's a question we've asked ourselves a lot over the last few months. But with all that has happened in the world in the three years since we held our last forum, we knew it was the right time to convene critical children's health partners and allies for action-oriented discussions on how we can bridge research, policy, and practice to create long-term, meaningful change for children and families as we recover from and move beyond the pandemic.

Therefore, I'm excited to announce PolicyLab Forum 2022, happening in partnership with AcademyHealth on May 9-10 in Philadelphia! As the event director, I'm here to give you a "behind the scenes" look at our planning and some ideas of what to expect as an attendee.

What Content Will the Event Cover?

When we first sat down to plan this event, our biggest question was how much of the agenda should focus on COVID-19. Certainly, the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic are some of the greatest challenges impacting children and families today, and likely still will be in May, but there are so many longstanding, unresolved issues, which have only been exacerbated by COVID-19. We determined we couldn't ignore the issue, but not knowing where we would be in the pandemic at the time of the event, we decided it was important to also highlight some of PolicyLab's "bread and butter" issues—work our incredible investigators have been pursuing for years given its importance to child and family health and well-being.

So we're doing a little bit of both: the first half day of our forum will focus on COVID-19 recovery and multi-sector engagement with schools in the wake of the pandemic, while the second day will have a big focus on children's coverage, interventions to support families' social needs and caregiver health. We'll cover specific topics such as school mental health services, addressing social needs in pediatric settings, caregiver substance use and a prevention paradigm for families to increase well-being. If you're steeped in behavioral health or health equity, we'll have tracks you can follow through our breakout sessions so you can dedicate your event time to those issues.

It's a jam-packed agenda that we think anyone invested in improving the health and well-being of children will find incredibly interesting and valuable!

Who Will Be Speaking?

In addition to PolicyLab's outstanding researchers, we are curating an exciting list of high-profile speakers who represent a variety of sectors focused on improving children's health and well-being, including:

- **Dr. William Hite, Jr.,** the superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, who will be one of the esteemed superintendents we'll hear from during our session, "Cross-sector Partnerships to Support Schools in COVID-19 Recovery and Beyond: The Vision from Education Leaders."

- **Indivar Dutta-Gupta,** co-executive director of the Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality, who will contribute his expertise on policies related to child care and paid leave during our session, “A Caregiving Agenda that Delivers for Children and Families.”
- **Debra Lancaster,** executive director of the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University, who will also speak to paid leave policies during our session, “A Caregiving Agenda that Delivers for Children and Families.”

What Else Could I Expect as An Attendee?

While our speakers represent some of the brightest minds in children’s health policy and practice, it wouldn’t be a PolicyLab Forum if youth weren’t featured. In that spirit, we’re excited to be hosting an “Outstanding Youth Awards” ceremony at our evening reception on May 9, during which we’ll honor some amazing youth in the Philadelphia area who are making a difference on the health and well-being of their communities. We’re also excited to have young people help plan one of our breakout sessions on the power of youth voice in creating change, and we’ll be hosting a donation drive during the event to benefit a local youth-focused organization.

Attendees will also get to network with potential new collaborators from many different sectors, experience a showcase featuring our forum sponsors, get to know PolicyLab’s incredible community partners, and learn more about the important research PolicyLab team members dedicate their careers to from the people behind the work—all while taking in the beautiful, world-renowned Kimmel Center and enjoying springtime in Philadelphia!

Planning for and putting on this large event is truly a collaboration across our center—from establishing the agenda, to the logistics, to working with our speakers—and we hope that you’ll join us to shine the spotlight on children and teens as our country moves beyond the pandemic and towards a brighter future.

Lauren Walens, MA, is a former strategic operations and communications director at PolicyLab.