Introducing PolicyLab’s Community Partnerships in Research Program

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I’m excited to share that PolicyLab recently launched the Community Partnerships in Research Program, which funds community-engaged research partnerships and pilot grants. This new program seeks to promote health equity in the Greater Philadelphia area by building and deepening community-academic partnerships for research projects that explore how we can improve health outcomes among children and families in our community.

Through two grant types—Joint Pilot Project Awards and Partnership Development Awards— our program specifically aims to build capacity at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) for community-academic partnered research and to support the next generation of health equity researchers in the use of community-based research methods and principles. We also seek to add a meaningful venue to increase community voice in the research development pipeline and processes at CHOP.

Over the past year, an advisory group of PolicyLab faculty members, staff, and community partners met to shape and launch this program. We developed the program using key informant interviews with faculty members engaged in community-partnered research, a landscape review of similar programs at peer institutions, foundational and emerging literature on health equity and community-based research, and importantly, the expertise, values, and goals of the academic and community partners who made up the advisory group.

I am proud of where we have landed and grateful for all we have learned. There are many exciting avenues for growth and collaboration for these grants moving forward. I look forward to watching this program take root and seeing the number of research partnerships in our community grow. For PolicyLab, I am also excited to be

developing a cohort of awardees with a shared passion for this work to push the field forward.

Today, it brings me joy to announce the inaugural awardees for both award tracks:

Joint Pilot Project Awards are geared towards established community-academic partnerships who seek funds for a well-defined research project that may produce preliminary data or programs for future competitive grant applications.

Defining and Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches: Bridging the Academic-Community Divide to Support Community-based, Youth Serving Programs

Building on their ongoing partnership established in early 2020, Dr. Rachel Myers, research scientist at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention (CIRP) at CHOP and a research scholar with the Center for Violence Prevention (CVP) at CHOP, and Ronna Kassel, executive director of Christian Street YMCA, will support, implement, sustain, and evaluate the impact of trauma-informed approaches within 16 branches of the Greater Philadelphia YMCA. Overall, this project will specifically address how to create competence and confidence among program staff to deliver community-based programming in trauma-informed ways.

Partnership Development Awards provide seed funding to support activities related to the development of new or emerging community-academic research partnerships.

Strengthening Partnerships to Elevate Home Visiting Community Voice

Tara Dechert, MS, a program manager at PolicyLab, will work alongside Shukriyyah Mitchell, BSN, RN, senior director of outreach and advocacy at the National Nurse-Led Care Consortium, to build a parent and family advisory council that would ensure the community of home-visited clients' voices are incorporated in all implementation efforts including recruitment and outreach efforts, and research and quality improvement. From this work, their goal is to develop pathways that can be replicated across systems and organizations to allow clients and the home visiting community to lead and partake in future research and decision-making processes.

A Multimodal Approach to Exploring the Adultification of Black Girls and its Impact on Medical and Mental Health Outcomes

Dr. Daniela Brissett, a fellow in the Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP, and Dr. Nadia Dowshen, faculty member at PolicyLab and the director of Adolescent HIV Services in the Craig Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP, will team up with Dr. Tawanna Jones, executive director of WE R.E.I.G.N.: Rooting, Empowering, and Inspiring a Girl's Nation, to explore, through personal narratives, the lived experiences of adolescent youth who identify as Black and female aged 13-25. They hope this project will create a better understanding of how Black girls respond to institutional stereotypes but also to examine existing resilience skills used in their everyday lives.

A Collaborative Approach to Building a Menstrual Hygiene Product Distribution Site Within a Pediatric Hospital-based Food Pharmacy

Dr. Shelby Davies, a faculty member at PolicyLab and an attending physician in the Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP, is partnering with Lynette Medley, MEd, founder and chief executive officer of No More Secrets Mind Body Spirit (MBS) Inc. and co-chief executive officer and founder of the SPOT Period, to create a research partnership infrastructure between CHOP's Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP, The Food Pharmacy at CHOP, and No More Secrets MBS Inc. and The SPOT Period. This first-of-its-kind partnership will aim to better understand the relationship between food insecurity and period poverty as a means for developing a menstrual product distribution program within a food pharmacy, which is a food bank and education center

aiming to reduce hunger and improve health by making nutritious foods readily available to patients and their families.

We are thrilled to support such terrific work in our inaugural cohort of awardees. Stay tuned to the PolicyLab website for more details as these projects progress.

Meredith Matone
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DrPH, MHS
Director