Creating Equitable Telehealth Policies in Pediatric Specialty Care

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Telehealth is a promising way to address pediatric workforce challenges and improve access to care, particularly for families who don't live close to specialty care. However, PolicyLab research has highlighted reason to be concerned about equity of telehealth access, particularly for families who prefer a language other than English (PLOE), with less experience using digital technology and who encounter socioeconomic hardship.

With a focus on how telehealth does, or doesn't, improve access issues to developmental behavioral pediatrics specifically, we must examine policies surrounding telehealth and work together with researchers, policymakers, and health care providers to create policies supportive of all families, especially PLOE families, in order to close the digital divide.

On June 14, 2023, PolicyLab hosted a virtual conversation titled, "**Creating Equitable Telehealth Policies in Pediatric Specialty Care,**" with pediatricians, researchers, policymakers, and family advocates who discussed innovative ways to create telehealth policies that provide more equitable access to pediatric specialty care for families who have been left behind by the initial wave of telehealth implementation.

They discussed important questions such as: How was state policy supportive of equitable access to telehealth during the pandemic, and how was it not? What opportunities do health systems have to close the digital divide related to telehealth access, particularly for families who speak and read a language other than English? What are the most pressing research questions related to the quality of telehealth care delivery?

Panelists included:

- **David Bentz,** deputy director of healthcare reform at the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, former member of the Delaware House of Representatives
- **Sansanee Craig, MD,** attending physician, assistant professor and clinical informatician in the Department of Biomedical and Health Informatics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
- **Roseani Sánchez Algarín, M.Ed,** director of programs at Family Voices National
- **Kate E. Wallis**, **MD, MPH,** faculty member at PolicyLab, attending physician in CHOP's Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania, and associate fellow in Penn's Center for Public Health Initiatives *(moderator)*

Resources shared or mentioned during the conversation:

- City of Philadelphia Office of Innovation & Technology's Digital Equity Plan
- City of Philadelphia's Digital Literacy Alliance

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