Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Access to emergency contraception expanded; more education needed

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UPDATE: On June 10th, the Justice Department dropped its appeal that asked to overturn a federal court order directing the FDA to make emergency contraception available over-the-counter and without age restrictions. One form of emergency contraception will now be available available to women of all ages and without a prescription. Education and effective communication between pediatricians and patients will be more important than ever.

PREVIOUSLY: On April 5th, a federal judge ordered that Plan B, often called the "morning-after pill" be made available over-the-counter for all ages. Following this ruling, on April 30th the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) lowered the age limit to allow those aged 15 and older to buy one form or emergency contraception without a prescription.

A recent study published by PolicyLab's Cynthia Mollen and colleagues highlights barriers to the use of EC among urban adolescents, including lack of awareness, misunderstanding about its effectiveness, and misinformation about its side effects. The study builds on previous research by Dr. Mollen that showed communication barriers between pediatricians and patients may contribute to EC's underuse in the adolescent population. The work points to the need for comprehensive education of adolescents and providers as core components of a robust pregnancy prevention campaign.

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