Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Health Status of Young Adult Mothers with a History of Child Welfare Involvement

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Half of female youth nationally with current or former experience in the child welfare system—the system responsible for responding to abuse and neglect of children and providing services to support vulnerable children and families—have a pregnancy by age 19 and nearly half have multiple pregnancies by this same age. Adolescent childbearing is associated with an increased risk for adverse birth outcomes and use of negative parenting approaches. These risks may be exacerbated among youth with child welfare system exposure who are more likely to have social- and health-related adversities. Understanding the risks for poor outcomes for young mothers with a history of child welfare involvement and their children is fundamental for improving the services provided to this population.

In this PolicyLab and Stoneleigh Foundation *Research at a Glance* brief, Dr. Meredith Matone studied the vital statistics, medical assistance claims and child welfare records of 16,000 mother-infant pairs in a large Mid-Atlantic city to determine the prevalence of physical and mental/behavioral health conditions among young mothers with a relationship to the child welfare system. She then reviewed prescription claim files and identified any medications prescribed to treat these chronic health conditions. To establish if a young mother experienced discontinuity in the use of a medication, she separately identified medications prescribed in the preconception and postpartum periods.

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