Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

How a Healthy Title X Program Saves Lives and Dollars in 200 Words

Adolescent Health & Well-Being

Date Posted:

May 19, 2017



Guest blogger Melissa Weiler Gerber is the president and CEO of AccessMatters, a non-profit organization that works to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and adults. She works closely with PolicyLab researcher Cynthia Mollen, MD, MSCE, who serves as the president of the board of directors for Access Matters.

With much polarizing political rancor in our nation about sexual and reproductive health services, we wanted to take a step back to highlight the federal Title X family planning program, and the broad bi-partisan support that led to its founding in 1970.

Title X provides crucial health services to four million low-income and underserved people annually. Following rigorous standards of care, 4,000 Title X-funded centers have helped women avoid unintended pregnancies, pregnancy complications and infertility. Also at these centers, patients receive cervical cancer screenings, and both men and women can obtain early treatment for sexually transmitted infections, among other services.

Title X has reaped an enormous financial benefit, saving almost $7 billion in 2010. Furthermore, recent estimates suggest that the rate of unintended pregnancy – one of the greatest costs to our health care system – would increase 33 percent if Title X services are eliminated, including a 30 percent increase among teenagers.

In 1970, then-Representative George H.W. Bush, the lead congressional sponsor of the Title X legislation, said, *"If family planning is anything, it is a public health matter."* Never has it been more critical to recommit to this sentiment, to peel away the bombast and focus on the substance of this life-saving cornerstone of family planning and other preventive reproductive health services in the United States.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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