



# ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A SNAPSHOT OF A POLICYLAB RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

WE'RE SEEKING  
TO BETTER  
ADDRESS  
THE UNIQUE  
HEALTH CARE  
CHALLENGES  
ADOLESCENTS  
FACE TO  
PROMOTE A  
TRANSITION  
INTO HEALTHY,  
PRODUCTIVE  
ADULTS.

Adolescence, marked by *rapid growth and development*, is a critically important *life stage* for health and well-being. The health and well-being youth experience during this period have a lasting impact, shaping an individual's overall health into adulthood.

The collaborative of social, behavioral, and physician scientists at PolicyLab have expertise in behavioral health, sexual and reproductive health, and transitioning to adult care, among other topic areas. We aim to improve health outcomes for the *millions* of adolescents and young adults in the U.S., with a focus on underserved and marginalized youth, by advancing equitable access and utilization of quality services and centering youth perspective in our approach.

Alongside our policy and communications strategists, we work together with partners who impact adolescent health to ensure our evidence-based research reaches the right decision-makers to shape policy and practice to improve health outcomes during this critical time of development.

## POLICYLAB'S FOCUS ON ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING ISSUES



### Health Needs in Adolescence

**The health needs of young people evolve along with the ways they engage with the health care system through adolescence.**

Our research aims to understand when, where and how to equip youth with supportive health resources, including health education and preventive behavioral health care.

We explore intersecting health needs, such as substance use and HIV prevention or eating disorders and gender. We want to better understand the unique needs of underserved youth, including those engaged in the foster system or identifying as LGBTQ+. We approach much of this work through community-engaged research methods.

As adolescents face a growing mental health *crisis*, we align our efforts with work being done in PolicyLab's *Behavioral Health Portfolio*. We explore ways to improve detection and



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treatment of eating disorders and adapt interventions to better connect Black youth with suicidal behaviors to mental health treatment.

Two specific health needs that are priorities for the portfolio are sexual and reproductive health and a young person's transition to adult care.



### Sexual & Reproductive Health

**Sexual development is a normal, natural, healthy part of human development and includes physical (puberty) and psychosocial (gender) changes. Many adolescents do not receive recommended sexual and reproductive services and education that could help them reach a healthy state of sexual health.**

Our research on sexual and reproductive health aims to ensure that sexually active adolescents make informed, healthy choices and have access to a system of care that supports them. We also design and test innovative ways of delivering care to adolescents to promote sexual and reproductive health, including expedited partner therapy to treat sexually transmitted infections, expanded access to contraceptives both in the emergency department and in primary care, and digital health interventions like apps that encourage youth to engage in comprehensive sexual health care.

Recognizing that menstrual health management is a critical yet often overlooked component of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, our research focuses on understanding the barriers and facilitators to adequate menstrual health and hygiene and ensuring that all adolescents have access to the resources they need to manage their menstrual health safely and with dignity.



### Transitioning to Adult Care

**The transition from pediatric to adult health care can be difficult to navigate, especially for youth with complex health care needs.**

Our research explores how to break down these barriers and improve transition processes for patients and families. We have an emerging body of work examining how social determinants of health impact adolescent outcomes during this transition, particularly for those with cancer, sickle cell disease and HIV. Because young adults are among those most likely to be uninsured, we recognize this as an area for future expansion and investment as the need for improved transition services continues to grow.



**VISIT [POLICYLAB.CHOP.EDU/OUR-RESEARCH/ADOLESCENT-HEALTH-WELL-BEING](https://policylab.chop.edu/our-research/adolescent-health-well-being)**

for full reference list and to learn more about all of our adolescent health and well-being research.