

# Leveraging Pediatric Infant Visits to Improve Access to LARC for Teen Mothers

## Statement of Problem

Unintended pregnancies, a measure that includes both unwanted and mistimed pregnancies, account for 73 percent of teen pregnancies in Pennsylvania. Additionally, 20 percent of teen births occur to those who are already mothers. Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) are the most effective form of contraception and can reduce repeat pregnancies for mothers, but few young women use them. As PolicyLab researchers have previously identified, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence demonstrating the safety and efficacy of LARCs, yet they are rarely a provider's or patient's first choice contraceptive.

We also recognize while many mothers never return to their own physicians for postpartum care, almost all report visiting the pediatrician's office. Pediatric clinicians are, therefore, well positioned to provide intergenerational services to teen mothers to reduce unintended pregnancies, such as counseling about LARCs and referral to Obstetrics/Gynecology.

## Description

To identify teen mothers with unmet contraceptive needs, our team is working to leverage infant well-child visits to immediately connect young women with LARC-providing clinicians. By doing so, we expect more women will use LARCs and unplanned pregnancies will decrease.

Since teen mothers are not often our patients, we are using the electronic health record (EHR) to identify them. For those mothers, prompts in the EHR will encourage pediatric clinicians to document maternal age, contraception preferences, unmet needs and barriers to accessing birth control. To ensure women are then connected to appropriate resources, our participating pediatric clinicians will have established contacts in our own Adolescent Medicine division, as well as in local Obstetrics/Gynecology and Family Medicine practices who can provide proactive outreach for mothers without scheduled postpartum visits.

## Next Steps

By identifying and offering support to teen mothers in the pediatric health system, we can move towards a healthier life for both mother and her child and prevent unintended pregnancies. We hope that this project will be the first step in leveraging our EHR to improve perinatal outcomes at the population level by more effectively promoting health for young mothers seeking care in the CHOP system.

*This project page was last updated in January 2019.*

## Suggested Citation

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## PolicyLab Leads

### **Emily Gregory MD, MHS**

#### **Faculty Member**

Emily Gregory is a faculty member at PolicyLab, an assistant professor in the Division of General Pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and a practicing primary care pediatrician. Her research addresses maternal-child health and health care redesign. Her current work focuses on the role of pediatrics in supporting health care access and health behavior change for women following high-risk pregnancies, with a goal of improving subsequent pregnancy outcomes and long-term women's health. She is interested in teamwork and the role of nurses in pediatric primary care. Prior work has addressed breastfeeding, postpartum depression, healthy weight during pregnancy, contraceptive access and preventive health care utilization, among other topics.

Dr. Gregory holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a medical degree from McGill University. She completed her pediatrics residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and fellowship in Academic Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins, where she also obtained a Master of Health Sciences at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Gregory's research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health, the March of Dimes, the U.S. Maternal Child Health Bureau, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through a Young Investigator Award from the Academic Pediatrics Association.



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### **Aletha Y. Akers MD, MPH, FACOG**

#### **Faculty Scholar**

Aletha Y. Akers is a faculty scholar and a former faculty member at PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). In June 2020, Dr. Akers began her new position as the vice president for research at Guttmacher Institute. In this role, she leads the Institute's team of scientists as they carry out research to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights both nationally and globally.

During her time at PolicyLab, Dr. Akers' research focused on improving reproductive health outcomes among young women by reducing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates. Her projects included an examination on how sexual risk behaviors varied among adolescents of different weight profiles; a clinical trial of a health coaching intervention to improve contraceptive continuation among adolescent women in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic; a clinical trial examining the effect of paracervical nerve blocks on pain experienced during insertion of intrauterine contraceptive devices among adolescent and young adult women; an assessment of young women's attitudes towards long-acting reversible contraceptive devices among in Botswana; online strategies for improving parental-child communication about sex; and clinical quality improvement initiatives to increase contraceptive use among adolescents using teratogenic medications. Dr. Akers also served as the faculty lead of PolicyLab's Adolescent Health & Well-being portfolio and for PolicyLab's Diversity Taskforce.

At CHOP, Dr. Akers served as the inaugural medical director of Adolescent Gynecology Consultative Services in the Craig-Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine. She founded and directed a complex family planning clinic at CHOP that provides comprehensive contraceptive services, including the placement and removal of contraceptive devices, for young women, particularly those with chronic medical problems.

Dr. Akers received bachelor's degrees in chemistry and biology, with honors, from Bryn Mawr College, her medical degree from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and her Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. She completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Michigan. While at UNC-Chapel Hill, Dr. Akers completed the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program, a health services research fellowship.



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## Funders of Project

The March of Dimes

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## Related Tools & Publications

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[Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy in Pennsylvania through Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives Tools and Memos](#)

Mar 2016

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[Support for Self-Management and Prenatal Health Behavior Change: Implications for Pediatric Promotion of Interconception Care Article](#)

Mar 2018

## Related Projects

[Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy in Pennsylvania through Long-Acting Reversible Contraception Adolescent Health & Well-Being](#)