Get to Know PolicyLab's New Health Equity Strategy Director Emmy Stup

Health Equity

Date Posted:

May 30, 2018

At PolicyLab, our vision for health equity is a world without *avoidable* or *remediable* differences in health and well-being among groups of children, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically. While we have a research portfolio specifically dedicated to achieving this vision, it is also a driving tenant of all of our research because we know that by using a health equity lens we can thoughtfully evaluate programs and policies to ensure that they do not inadvertently create inequities in child health outcomes.

Since we reorganized our work under our four research portfolios last year, we've known that we needed a strong leader in the health equity field to help us think strategically about how we develop all of our research to address the health inequities we see in our health care practices every day. So, we conducted an extensive search and are excited to introduce the newest member of the PolicyLab team, Emmy Stup, to our partners and audiences.

Emmy is taking on a new, exciting role for our center as health equity strategy director. In this position, she will not only be setting the organization's strategic direction on our health equity research, but working with each of our four research portfolios and our policy and communications teams to align and obtain their research and policy goals, all through a health equity lens. Much of this work will involve connecting with you, our partners and respected colleagues, as we continue to engage communities and policymakers in the development of our research questions and evidence-based policy solutions.

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Emmy has historically tackled child health equity issues through the perspective of adolescent reproductive and sexual health. Most recently, she led efforts to identify and implement innovative approaches to improving youth sexual health outcomes as director of Sexual and Reproductive Health at Public Health Management Corporation. I sat down with Emmy to ask her a few questions about her background and new role. Upon reading I'm sure you'll be just as excited as we are to have her on board.

Meredith: What are you most excited about for your new role?

Emmy: I believe deeply in the importance of our mission, and I am thrilled to support and grow PolicyLab's innovative and comprehensive approaches to improving youth and family health outcomes through research and practice. Health equity is the underlying current of all of PolicyLab's research and policy initiatives and is

critical to improving health outcomes for all youth. The health equity portfolio faculty are leading innovative research projects that will arm health care settings, youth service providers and policymakers with strategies to ensure that minority and marginalized youth across the nation receive culturally responsive, low-barrier medical care and high-quality early childhood education. I'm thrilled to support the health equity researchers in visioning and shaping the future of health equity work at PolicyLab and partnering with each of PolicyLab's research portfolios to support center-wide initiatives to improve youth health outcomes.

M: What drives your passion for working in the health equity field?

E: I love children and believe that all young people deserve to thrive and live healthy lives. Throughout my time working in school systems in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, I have met countless students who struggle in several areas in their lives because they lack access to health and educational services that are responsive to their unique needs. My goal is to do all that I can to minimize systemic and social barriers that prevent young people from thriving physically and emotionally.

M: What progress do you think we've made in reducing health inequities for children and adolescents? And where do you think the biggest challenges still lie?

E: One of the areas where we've seen tremendous progress is in reducing the adolescent pregnancy rate for youth of color and low-income youth in the United States. Adolescent pregnancy has intergenerational impacts on poverty, educational attainment and health outcomes, so progress in this area is a big win. Utilizing many of the lessons learned from the success of the U.S. Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, developing approaches to comprehensive care that are low-barrier and culturally responsive to the unique and diverse needs of youth and families is relevant to each of PolicyLab's research portfolios and is an area where we are poised to serve as a thought leader. Transforming approaches to health care delivery to meet the needs of diverse populations of youth is a huge task, but we're up for the challenge.

M: Where do you think we need to start to address those challenges?

E: One strategy for reducing systemic and social barriers to improved health outcomes is to develop and evaluate sophisticated, widely replicable models for health care delivery that are designed to meet the nuanced and diverse needs of youth and their families regardless of their socio-economic status, race, gender identity or immigration status.

M: Finally, tell us something interesting about yourself that we wouldn't learn by reading your CV!

E: As a vegetarian since the age of seven, I've taste tested every vegan cheesesteak in the tristate area. I'm always happy to compare notes.

Meredith Matone
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DrPH, MHS
Director