The National Academies' Vibrant and Healthy Kids Report in 200 words

Health Equity

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The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine recently released an important report taking a broad view of factors contributing to inequities in health outcomes, including prenatal and intergenerational exposures. While many of us focus on individual- or community-level factors impacting children's health, I found their report insightful because it takes a step back to look holistically at factors across the life course. They explain that a child faces negative health outcomes when they lack access to positive experiences that can promote health—such as strong and healthy caregiver relationships—and continuously face negative, harmful influences, such as food insecurity and unstable housing. The report also describes how trauma, poverty, and racism biologically affect youth, and the ways that early childhood experiences and circumstances impact the developing brain and body.

Importantly, the report provides a roadmap for better-designed policies, systems and programs that can promote health. For example, it lends support to expanding and coordinating programs that benefit the whole family, such as food assistance, home visiting, paid parental leave and early education.

PolicyLab is at the cutting edge of thinking about these issues, and many of our areas of focus match the report's recommendations, including the work of our Intergenerational Family Services Portfolio to support caregivers; programs to improve early educational programs in promoting lifelong health; and research within our Health Equity Portfolio to further understand and address the drivers of health inequities. We will use the

reports' findings to support our work and find opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

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 Strategy & Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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