Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Informing Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Health Equity Response

Statement of Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has not impacted all Americans equally. Many vulnerable and marginalized populations are at higher risk of exposure, severe illness, and death from the disease, as well as from indirect harms such as food insecurity and loss of health insurance coverage. PolicyLab experts have raised concerns related to the pandemic's disparate effects on racial and ethnic minorities, immigrant families, children living in rural areas, the economically challenged, and those with mental health and substance use disorders, among others. Policy and systems changes are urgently needed to address immediate disparities related to COVID-19, as well as the underlying issues that have created them.

Description

Our Health Equity Portfolio is working with Pennsylvania's Department of Health to develop recommendations for addressing health disparities related to COVID-19.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health convened a COVID-19 Health Equity Response Team in April 2020. Diverse stakeholders from across the Commonwealth participated in subcommittees to develop recommendations for addressing health disparities. PolicyLab facilitated a subcommittee on economically-challenged individuals, low-wage workers and un- and underinsured populations. PolicyLab experts also joined a range of other subcommittees, including those related to pregnant women and parents of extremely young children, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, those with limited English proficiency, and rural Pennsylvanians. In addition to writing recommendations for the committee it facilitated, PolicyLab also drafted a recommendation that COVID-19 data collection should include metrics on preferred language.

All recommendations were finalized in June 2020 and were shared with Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine, the Lieutenant Governor's COVID-19 Task Force on Health Disparity and other key stakeholders. In addition to addressing concerns specific to COVID-19, many of the Health Equity Response Team's suggestions strive to address longer-term, underlying issues related to insurance coverage, access to health care and social determinants of health.

In November 2020, PolicyLab drafted a white paper sharing results of a survey that was conducted through this process among Pennsylvania stakeholders working with immigrant and limited English proficient populations. The white paper findings were summarized in a blog post in English, Spanish and French, as well as a policy brief that was shared widely with local, state, and national stakeholders who serve immigrant, refugee, and limited-English proficient populations.

Next Steps

PolicyLab experts have continued their involvement with the Pennsylvania Department of Health in helping to implement the initial recommendations as well as informing its COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans.

This project page was last updated in May 2021.

Suggested Citation

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PolicyLab. *Informing Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Health Equity Response* [Online]. Available at: http://www.policylab.chop.edu. [Accessed: plug in date accessed here].

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Related Tools & Publications

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Policy Briefs
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Are Pediatricians Ready to Care for Immigrant Families in a Time of Crisis?
Blog Post
Apr 16, 2020

Are Refugee Essential Workers at a Higher Risk of Contracting COVID-19?
Blog Post
Mar 04, 2021

COVID-19 and Mothers with Substance Use Disorders
Blog Post
May 18, 2020

COVID-19 and Pennsylvania's Rural Kids
Blog Post
Apr 27, 2020

COVID-19 Disparities and Impacts on Emotional Health & Well-being of Diverse Children
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May 13, 2020

COVID-19: How Missing Milestones is Impacting Teen Mental Health
Blog Post
May 05, 2020

Ensuring Support Services for Youth With Disabilities & Special Health Care Needs Amid COVID-19
Webinars
Jul 2020

FAQ: Support for Children with Special Educational Needs Amid COVID-19
Tools and Memos
Aug 2020

Pressing Issues Facing Children and Families: Reflections One Year into the Pandemic
Blog Post
Apr 29, 2021

Supporting Immigrant Communities and Those with Limited English Proficiency During the Pandemic: Stakeholder Perspectives from Pennsylvania
Tools and Memos
Nov 2020

Thawing the Chill From Public Charge Will Take Time and Investment
Blog Post
Apr 13, 2021

Utilizing Rapid Qualitative Assessment and Thematic Analysis Methods to Identify and Share Promising Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Practices with People in Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Communities During COVID-19
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