Centering Youth in Supporting Access to Comprehensive Reproductive and Sexual Health Services

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Growing rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and limited access to comprehensive reproductive health care in many states highlight the need to better support our teens with research, programming and policies that address their full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health care needs.

In order to effectively respond to their needs, it's critical for us to consider adolescents' perspectives about their health and how research, programs and policy can contribute to solutions. What opportunities exist to meaningfully engage adolescents to understand needs, develop and implement responses, and support related policymaking processes?

On Nov. 17, 2022, PolicyLab hosted a virtual conversation titled, "Centering Youth in Supporting Access to Comprehensive Reproductive and Sexual Health Services" during which pediatricians, researchers, and experts in HIV care, STI testing, and contraception, who discussed how research can include youth perspectives in understanding their reproductive and sexual health needs and support access to services, as well as how policy can address gaps in care.

They discussed important questions such as: What are strategies for engaging young people as leaders or experts in research? How do you ensure you get the voices of those most marginalized in your work? How is health education in schools being considered in the solutions?

Panelists included:

- Bianca Allison, MD, MPH, assistant professor in the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine
- Aisha Mays, MD, clinical researcher at the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco, and medical director of the Dream Youth Clinic at the Roots Community Health Center
- Sarah Wood, MD, MSHP, faculty member at PolicyLab, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, and assistant director of Adolescent HIV Services in the Craig Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
- Sarah Green, MD, faculty scholar at PolicyLab, assistant professor at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and Adolescent Medicine physician at CHOP (moderator)

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