Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Utilizing the Emergency Department to Provide Contraception Counseling to Teens in 200 Words

Adolescent Health & Well-Being

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Teens face many barriers to receiving evidence-based sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including limited education in schools and poor access to care. These barriers are especially concerning when 75% of adolescent pregnancies are unintended in the United States. And in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, access to factual and age-appropriate SRH services is more critical than ever.

PolicyLab researchers are working to expand SRH services by utilizing the emergency department (ED) to reach teens who may not seek care in other locations. Adolescents who use the ED are more likely to forego needed health care services, to report mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and to be sexually active and inconsistently using contraception. This makes the ED an important but under-utilized location to provide SRH services.

We recently developed and implemented an intervention focused on all interested adolescent girls and those assigned female at birth who expressed a desire to avoid pregnancy. We trained nurse practitioners and physician assistants in the ED to discuss the effectiveness of different contraception methods while paying attention to the adolescent's own needs and desires. We found counseling was feasible and acceptable to teens and clinicians, and the majority of counseled youth indicated they intended to initiate contraception.

Reaching teens anywhere they seek care can have a profound impact on their health care decisions. Even in the fast-paced ED, clinicians can provide adolescents with important SRH information in a concise, effective manner. As SHR services are threatened or disappearing, expanding services into non-traditional settings has never been more important.

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 Strategic Operations & Communications Director Lauren Walens.

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