

# ScreenWell: Using an App to Connect Teens in the Emergency Department to PrEP Resources and Services

## Statement of Problem

Adolescents and young adults comprise a [significant proportion](#) of new HIV diagnoses in the United States but are less likely than other age groups to know their status or be virally suppressed. Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends](#) HIV screening and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) counseling as part of routine medical care for all adolescents, adolescents and young adults do not receive adequate HIV testing or PrEP education, and their uptake of PrEP is low.

Many barriers prevent adolescents and young adults from receiving HIV prevention and treatment services, including the lack of a medical home for primary care. It is common for adolescents and young adults to utilize the emergency department and urgent care services to meet their health care needs instead of regularly visiting a primary care provider.

## Description

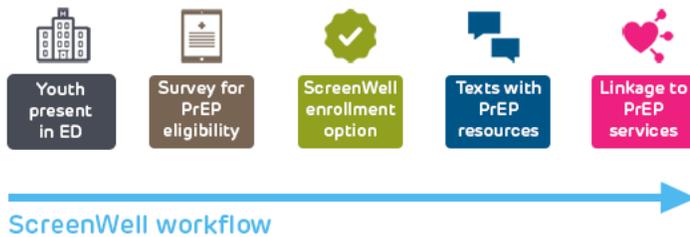
To meet youth where they seek medical attention while addressing the urgent need for increased HIV prevention and treatment services, two multi-site studies are implementing HIV screening programs in pediatric emergency departments: (1) ScreenSmart and (2) Screen to Prevent (S2P). The studies share similar protocols and project leadership, but they are conducted by different research networks at different sites. A key intervention in both studies is ScreenWell, an application designed and developed by the multi-site principal investigators and the CHOP Research Information Systems Application Services team.

*ScreenWell* sends text messages with information about HIV PrEP to ScreenSmart and S2P participants who opt in. Each study site has a PrEP navigator who is contacted by ScreenWell when a participant decides to opt in. The PrEP navigator may then personally contact the participant and offer help with linking to clinical services.

## ScreenWell Workflow

The workflow for ScreenSmart and S2P begins in the emergency department, where eligible patients take a screening survey with behavior-based questions related to HIV acquisition risk. Based on participants' responses, the survey calculates whether they are eligible for PrEP. Individuals eligible for PrEP are asked if they would like to receive more information about the medication via text message. If so, participants may sign up for ScreenWell by providing their cell phone number and consent for receiving text messages. On the backend, *ScreenWell* accomplishes the following:

1. Engages a chat-bot to text each enrolled participant a script of messages, which include PrEP resources (trustworthy websites) and contact information for the site PrEP navigator.
2. Sends a notification to the site PrEP navigator, who reaches out to the newly enrolled participant directly to offer help.



### ScreenSmart

ScreenSmart is funded by an R01 award from [The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(NICHD\)](#) and is part of the [Pediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network \(PECARN\)](#). Beginning December 2024, the study is being conducted at three pediatric emergency department sites: Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, and Children’s Wisconsin – Milwaukee.

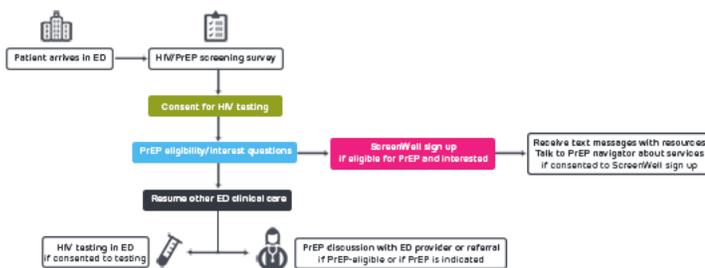
Emergency department staff are implementing universal opt-out HIV screening to patients ages 14–21 years who present in the emergency department over a period of 30 months. ScreenSmart also features clinical decision support in the electronic medical record and integration with *ScreenWell*. These processes were first adopted and refined during a six-month implementation period meant to improve uptake of HIV screening and testing at each site.

### Screen to Prevent (S2P)

S2P is supported by a cooperative agreement as part of an [NICHD UM2](#) award to the [University of South Florida](#) for the [Adolescent Medicine Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions \(ATN\)](#). The five S2P sites include emergency departments at University of South Florida, Johns Hopkins University, St. Jude Children’s Hospital, Emory Healthcare and Texas Children’s.

Beginning June 2026, staff at these sites will implement three distinct approaches to HIV screening for patients ages 14–24 who present in the emergency department: universal opt-out, universal opt-in, and targeted. The study will also feature clinical decision support in the electronic medical record and integration with *ScreenWell*.

Patient’s path in the pediatric ED during Screen Smart and S2P interventions



## Next Steps

Implementation for ScreenSmart and S2P projects are in process.

A new single intervention site project called “Optimizing Linkage of Youth from Emergency Department to Education and PrEP Care (ED2PrEP)” in collaboration with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) and funded through their Place Outcomes Research Award, will integrate ScreenWell in 2026. The study aims to increase PrEP knowledge and uptake for HIV prevention among adolescent and young adult seen in the CCHMC emergency department by providing patients with the opportunity to engage in ScreenWell. Study activities began officially in February 2026.

We hope the ScreenSmart, S2P, and ED2PrEP interventions will help adolescents and young adults receive essential testing for HIV, and for those eligible and interested in starting PrEP, will support them in getting started on the medication. Findings from these studies may provide valuable insights on overcoming barriers which that may be preventing pediatric emergency departments from adopting HIV screening programs, the benefits and drawbacks of various HIV screening strategies, and the implementation of CDC guidance related to HIV screening and PrEP counseling overall.

This project page was last updated in February 2026.

## Suggested Citation

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## PolicyLab Leads

### **Nadia Dowshen MD, MSHP**

#### **Faculty Member**

Nadia Dowshen (she/her) is a faculty member at PolicyLab at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and serves as Director of Adolescent HIV Services in the Craig Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP. She is also an associate professor of pediatrics and the Associate Director of the Masters of Health Policy Research at the Perelman School of Medicine at University of Pennsylvania and a Stoneleigh fellow.

In addition to specialized care for youth living with HIV/AIDS, Dr. Dowshen also provides general adolescent medical care at CHOP and Covenant House, PA, a youth shelter located in Philadelphia. She recently co-founded the CHOP Sexuality and Gender Development Clinic which now provides medical and

psychosocial support to more than 2,000 gender variant children and adolescents. Dr. Dowshen's research focuses on using youth-friendly technology to improve adherence to antiretroviral therapy and improve other health outcomes for adolescents living with HIV/AIDS. She is also interested more broadly in research around issues of STD and HIV prevention and treatment as well as achieving health equity for other marginalized youth including LGBT and homeless adolescents.

Dr. Dowshen received the 2010 Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine New Investigator Award for her research identifying protective factors against HIV infection among transgender youth. She was recently named an NIH Adolescent Trials Network (ATN) Scholar and a Best Young Investigator by the National Centers for AIDS Research (CFAR). Dr. Dowshen also serves on the Board of Directors of the Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), a national non-profit which promotes comprehensive education about sexuality, and advocates for the right of individuals to make responsible sexual choices. Dr. Dowshen received both her M.D. and Masters of Science in Health Policy Research from the University of Pennsylvania.



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## Team

### **Cynthia Mollen MD, MSCE**

#### **Faculty Director of Affiliate Trainee Program**

Additionally, Dr. Mollen is a professor of pediatrics at the Perelman School Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, core faculty leader for the Qualitative Research Core at CHOP, faculty leader for the Qualitative Methods Research Affinity Group, and a practicing pediatric emergency medicine physician at CHOP. Dr. Mollen completed both her pediatrics residency and pediatric emergency medicine fellowship at CHOP and became a faculty member upon completing her training in 2001. She also completed the Master of Science in Clinical Epidemiology during her fellowship.

Since joining the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania and CHOP, Dr. Mollen has developed and refined a research and clinical interest in adolescent health, with a particular focus on utilizing the emergency department and non-primary care settings as sites for interventions related to major public health issues affecting adolescents, such as unintended teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. She has also pursued

training in qualitative research methods and has utilized those methods in a variety of research projects. Dr. Mollen's projects have included interviewing adolescents to learn about their attitudes about developing an intervention aimed to improve the use of emergency contraception; exploring minority adolescents' perception about bias when seeking family planning care; assessing the decision-making processes of parents with terminally ill children; and improving access to expedited partner therapy for adolescents.



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## **Marné Castillo**

### **PhD, MEd**

#### **Faculty Scholar**

Marné Castillo (she/her) is a faculty scholar at PolicyLab and serves as the clinical and research director of the Adolescent Initiative, a multi-disciplinary program for HIV prevention, care, education and research at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

Dr. Castillo is the principal investigator for CHOP's Adolescent Trials Unit, which is supported by the National Institutes of Health in addition to several other multi-site studies. From 2002 to 2017, she led the "Connect to Protect Project," the Adolescent Trials Network community-based prevention research study focusing on community mobilization and HIV primary prevention.

Dr. Castillo's work focuses on adolescent health promotion and community engagement in research, especially with the House and Ball and Kiki communities. She also has broader interests around social determinants of health, with a special interest in trauma and improving outcomes for marginalized adolescents. In 2015, Dr. Castillo received the Center for AIDS Research Red Ribbon Award recognizing her work on behalf of adolescents in the field HIV prevention research in Philadelphia. She has served on the Board of Directors of several organizations, including Philadelphia FIGHT and GALAEI. Dr. Castillo received her PhD in public health and her master's degree in education from Temple University.



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