



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Bloomberg American Health Initiative

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

5

FOCUS AREAS

Addiction &
Overdose

Adolescent
Health

Environmental
Challenges

Obesity & The
Food System

Violence

Bloomberg American Health Initiative

Through education, research and practice, the Bloomberg American Health Initiative works to tackle five critical 21st-century challenges to health in the United States, with the goal of improving health outcomes and saving lives: addiction and overdose, environmental challenges, adolescent health, obesity and the food system, and violence.

Our cross-cutting themes are equity, evidence, and policy. These concepts drive our efforts to develop and scale programs and policies with impact.

The Initiative was established in late 2016 with a \$300 million gift from Bloomberg Philanthropies in honor of the centennial of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

We have grown quickly, and 2021, our 5th year, has been the most productive to date. This annual report shares some of the highlights.

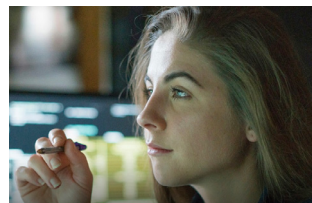
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CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Equity



Evidence



Policy





KEY

2021 DATA POINTS

TOTAL FELLOWS

211 total, including, **180** MPH students, **31** DrPH students

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

332 organizations including **183** collaborating organizations across **41** states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Mariana Islands.

COURSES

Created **23** courses taken by **1,931** students since inception. Bloomberg Professors of American Health and Bloomberg Centennial Professors, supported with endowment funds of the Bloomberg American Health Initiative: **20** faculty as of December 2021.

NEW FUNDED PROJECTS

Provided **50** grants including **9** applied experience awards, **2** public sector consultations, **7** Spark awards, **1** Vanguard award, **28** community collaborations and **3** educational innovations.

COMMUNICATIONS

More than **315K** unique visitors and over **875K** page views since the December 2020 launch of redesigned website. **3,382** Twitter followers. Initiative leadership, core and affiliated faculty appeared in over **600** notable media.

EVENTS

Held **5** virtual endowed professorship dedication ceremonies. Convened **2,290** people for the 2021 virtual American Health Summit.

Addiction & Overdose

RESEARCH

PUBLIC HEALTH VENDING MACHINES

Bloomberg Assistant Professor of American Health, **Sean Allen**, is collaborating with the Southern Nevada Health District and Trac-B Exchange to evaluate the impact of naloxone dispensation at public health vending machines on overdose mortality in Clark County, Nevada.

CONNECTION

FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

With support from the Initiative, Fellow **Alyssa Kitlas** of the North Carolina Division of Public Health is partnering with Fellow **Jacqueline Hackett**, Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, on a project to engage faith-based leaders in harm reduction efforts.

PROGRAM

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: POLICY

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Legal Action Center laid out in a report the legal obligations of emergency departments to provide evidence-based and lifesaving care to patients with substance use disorders. The effort has already led some hospitals to adopt these practices.

LAC LEGAL ACTION CENTER

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS CAN'T IGNORE ADDICTION

Hospitals are legally responsible for providing effective care to people with substance use disorder.

The addiction and overdose crises continue to escalate in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in July 2021 that more than 92,000 people in the U.S. died from overdose in the year leading up to December 2020, an almost 30% increase over the previous 12-month period.

Further, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx individuals have seen some of the steepest increases in overdose rates nationally and, in some areas, the highest rates of drug and alcohol disorders. Yet, many emergency departments discharge patients with substance use disorders without offering recommended and lifesaving care.

In a new legal analysis, the Legal Action Center (LAC) found that hospital emergency departments that do not follow the evidence to identify and treat patients with substance use disorders could violate a patient's legal rights under four federal laws and risk legal consequences. [Read the report.](#)



Fellow Spotlight



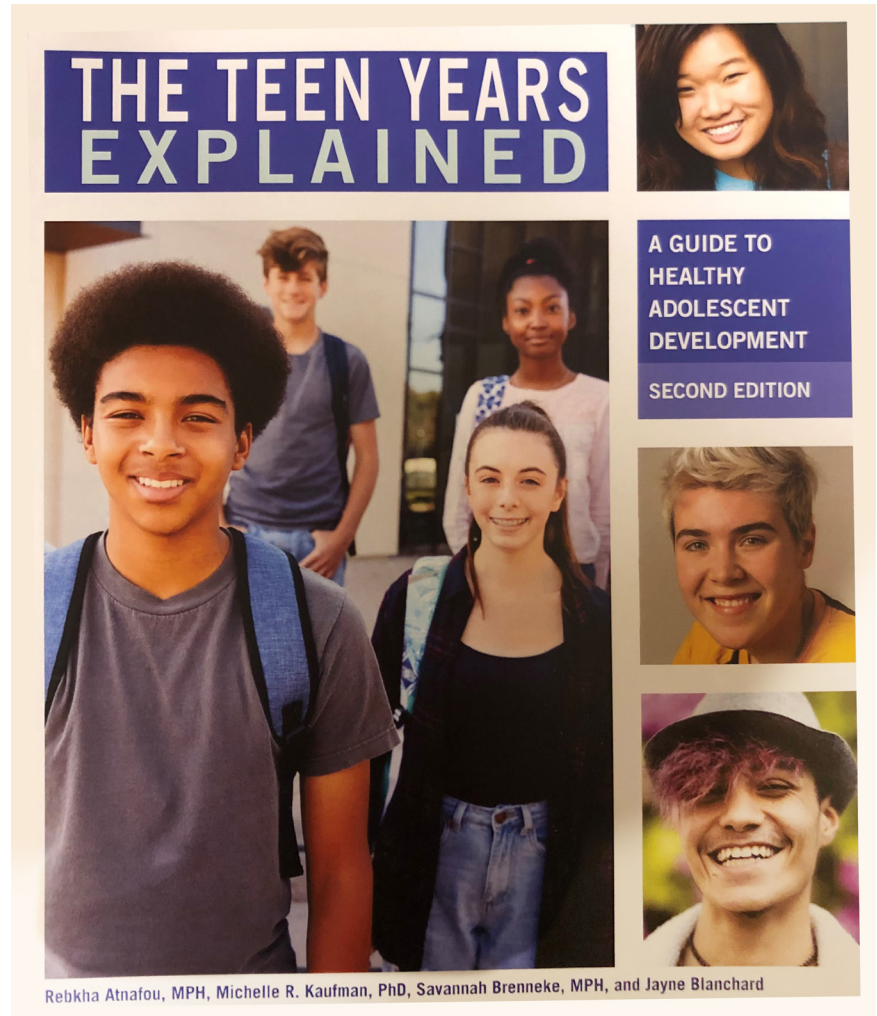
Augusta Gribetz is the Operations Manager at Charm City Care Connection, a harm reduction drop-in center in East Baltimore that provides services to people with substance use disorders. In 2018, Augusta helped shift the organization from a health resource center to a harm reduction drop-in center where she developed the organization's first advisory board.

Adolescent Health

EDUCATION

THE TEEN YEARS EXPLAINED

With support from the Initiative, **Rebka Atnafou** and **Michelle Kaufman** finalized the *Teen Years Explained Guide: Second Edition* to reflect critical new knowledge regarding adolescent development, including discussion of structural racism, social determinants of health, social media, and neurobiological impacts of trauma. It will be released in digital format in 2022.



CONNECTION

PREVENTING HIV INFECTION

Fellow **Julia Zigman**, a Program Analyst on the HIV, STI, and Viral Hepatitis team at the National Association of County and City Health Officials, joined forces with fellow **Armonté Butler**, the LGBTQ Health & Rights Senior Program Manager at Advocates for Youth. They are working together to build support for a draft proposal for a national program to make pre-exposure prophylaxis medications more accessible to prevent HIV.

PROGRAM

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: EVIDENCE

PEDIATRICIANS AND SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM

The CARE project in Washington D.C. aligns pediatricians and schools to address chronic absenteeism. In the first project of its kind, parents' consent to sharing attendance data with the pediatric practices of their children, using the regional health information exchange. Pediatric practices then coordinate with schools to understand the challenges children and families are facing and find solutions. The effort began at one hospital in Washington, D.C. Its early success has led to additional grant funding to extend and expand the project in the DC area, adoption in Delaware, and a national toolkit adopted by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Effort

Rx for Chronic Absenteeism

Over 6 million kids in the U.S. miss 15 or more days of school a year, according to federal data. This chronic absenteeism negatively affects educational achievement and long-term health outcomes.

The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Effort (CARE) Playbook can help health care systems and school districts work together to get students in classrooms and ready to learn.

[GET THE PLAYBOOK](#)

Education and Health are Intricately Connected

The impact of chronic absenteeism can reverberate throughout a student's life.

- School Attendance Matters**
Children and youth who attend school regularly are more likely to read on grade level, have stronger academic outcomes, and graduate on time. Missing too much school in early grades can lead to below grade-level reading in third grade, a key predictor of high school graduation.
- Absenteeism Can Lead to Long-Term Health Risks**
People without a high school diploma have greater health risks as adults and may live shorter lives.
- Data on Absenteeism Can Empower Healthcare Providers**
Healthcare providers can help students attend school regularly by addressing health and social issues that are keeping students out of school. However, often healthcare providers don't know that students are missing too much school.

Fellow Spotlight



Armonte Butler is the LGBTQ Health & Rights Senior Program Manager at Advocates for Youth where he supports a national cohort of young activists who lead sexual and reproductive health campaigns in their communities. He spearheads the Queer and Gender Equity Project, which supports youth-serving organizations in increasing their capacity to support LGBTQ youth of color and youth living with HIV through technical assistance.



Sarah-Michael Gaston is a Policy Advocate with Youth Forward where she is responsible for informing and engaging individuals and community groups in California to advocate for policies in support of racial justice and health equity. She develops broad coalitions and policy recommendations to influence the allocation of cannabis tax revenues and other state funding sources to assist youth.

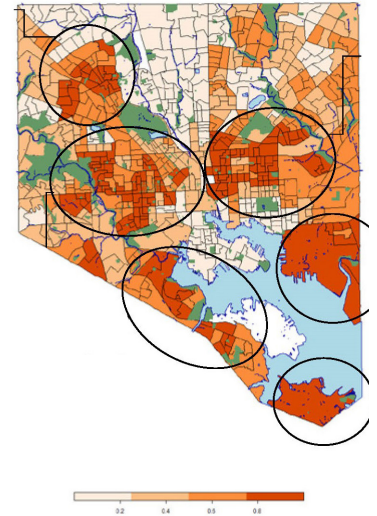
Environmental Challenges

RESEARCH

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: EQUITY

TRANSIT INEQUITY IN BALTIMORE

In collaboration with the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, Associate Scientist **Megan Latshaw** studied the relationship between the public transit system, key air pollutants and health impacts linked to transit in the Baltimore region. This “transit equity analysis” led to creation of a map that showed disparities between Baltimore’s notorious “white L,” where mostly white, higher income residents live, and “black butterfly,” where mostly black lower-income people reside. These concepts were named by **Dr. Lawrence Brown**, a research scientist in the Center for Urban Health Equity at Morgan State University.



Dr. Latshaw’s team submitted their final report to the U.S. Department of Transportation and the research informed proposals for transportation equity legislation in the Maryland General Assembly.



IN-UTERO EXPOSURE TO ENVIRONMENTAL HARMS

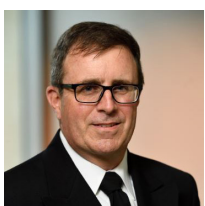
Assistant Professor **Alison Gemmil** and Associate Professor **Jessie Buckley** will examine relationships between climate-related in utero exposures, residential greenness, and adverse birth outcomes. The project began in July 2021 and is set to end in June 2022.



Fellow Spotlight



Paula Torrado Plazas is the Air and Toxics Policy Analyst at Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles where she leads the Community Air Protection Grant from the California Air Resources Board. She also works to address the pollution burden in South Central Los Angeles where she authored the 2019 South L.A. Air Quality Assessment Report.



David Harvey leads the Navajo Water Access Mission, which helped the Navajo Nation increase access to safe water sources and improved the safety of hauled water. The project helped improve environmental health conditions on the Navajo Nation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The round trip travel distance to a safe water source in 59 of 110 Chapters has been reduced on average from 52 to 17 miles for residents living in homes with no piped water.

Obesity & The Food System

RESEARCH

EMERGENCY FOOD ACCESS

Fulfilling a need identified by food pantry directors in Baltimore City, Professor **Joel Gittelsohn** partnered with the city of Baltimore to co-develop, implement, and assess an emergency preparedness training module and online learning management system with food pantry directors, managers, and volunteers.



CROSS-CUTTING THEME: POLICY

HEALTHY FOOD PURCHASING

Following a conference in January 2020 that was supported by the Initiative, core faculty **Alyssa Moran** is spearheading the development of a national agenda for research in food retail, with the goal of identifying policies and corporate practices that effectively promote healthy food and beverage purchases and decrease unhealthy purchases.

EDUCATION

FOOD POLITICS

The Initiative supported the creation of a new course, Food Industry, Politics and Public Health, taught by **Alyssa Moran** in the spring 2020/2021 term.



Fellow Spotlight



Denerale Jones is an Assistant Director at the Penn Center for Community Health Workers, where he supervises a team of community health workers at four Penn Medicine clinics and the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. A key goal of his team is to help city residents access safe and healthy food.



Matthew Feltrop-Herron is the Executive Director of the Patachou Foundation, an Indianapolis nonprofit whose mission is to cultivate an equitable future for youth by amplifying the value and power of food. He has grown their meal service footprint by 800 percent and annual funding by 400 percent and launched a coffee shop social enterprise to fund the work of the Foundation.

Violence

RESEARCH

MEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON REPRODUCTIVE COERCION

Assistant Professor **Charvonne Holliday Nworu** led a project to better understand men's perspective of reproductive coercion, an understudied form of intimate partner violence, to enhance existing prevention methods and surveillance. Data collected led to the creation of a tool to measure men's use of reproductive coercion; a continuation of this study received federal support from the National Institute of Child Health and Health Development by way of an Institutional Career Development Award. The project uncovered unreported reproductive coercion behaviors from the perspective of men themselves.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Assistant Scientist **Alex McCourt** looked to fill the gap of nonexistent "ghost guns" research by evaluating and summarizing existing state policy mechanisms for regulating untraceable guns. He also secured additional funding with the Initiative to design and produce digital learning content intended to educate advocates, policymakers, and the general public about issues related to "ghost guns", including existing evidence, the need for more data, and potential policy solutions.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME: EQUITY

POLICING INEQUITY

With tensions high between communities of color and police departments across the nation, Assistant Scientist **Hossein Zare** studied the disparate impact of policing by race and neighborhoods. The research provided evidence for less reliance on armed law enforcement and gun policy, including limited use of electrical weapons, increased use of police body-worn cameras, and more training of law enforcement about unconscious bias.



Fellow Spotlight



Rev. Wendy Calderón-Payne is Executive Director of Urban Youth Alliance where she has developed initiatives to reduce incarceration and violence through community-driven solutions. In 1999, she founded the Connect programs in the Bronx to provide alternative community-based pathways for youth and young adults who have committed serious crimes.



William Freeman works as the Program Coordinator and Research Assistant with From Prison Cells to PhD, where he oversees community recruitment efforts aimed to support people in their transition back into the community post-incarceration. The nonprofit organization based in Baltimore provides mentoring and educational counseling to help people obtain their educational goals.

COVID-19 and the Initiative

COVID-19 presented many obstacles for the way the Initiative did its work in 2021.

As preventing spread of disease became a top priority, that meant less travel and limited in-person meetings, recruitment and classes. Many Fellows saw themselves taking on new roles to address the quickly changing environment and new public health concerns created by new variants of the virus. The pandemic also presented the need for crucial research on the impact the virus was having on people's lives.

The Initiative supported nine projects that focused on the impact of COVID-19 in the local community and around the country. The projects were funded through COVID 19 Impact Projects and Launchpad Grants, which were in collaboration with the Alliance for a Healthier World.

Some of the projects that were funded included:

RE-ENTRY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Professor **Leonard Rubenstein** partnered with Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership, Freedom Advocates Celebrating Ex-Offenders, and the Re-Entry Network of Prince George's County to study incarceration and re-entry experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

HARM REDUCTION IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

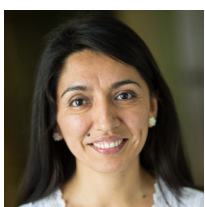
Associate Professor **Kathleen Page** and Professor **Greg Lucas** worked with the Baltimore City Health Department to study ways to improve access to and use of harm reduction health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND PANDEMIC-RELATED HOUSING INSECURITY

Bloomberg Assistant Professor of American Health **Tiara Willie** in partnership with Ujima, Inc.: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, looked at how the pandemic impacted housing security of Black women survivors of intimate partner violence.



Fellow Spotlight



Alumna Fellow **Mónica Guerrero Vázquez** is leading outreach in the Latino community in Baltimore as part of an effort to make sure all communities are getting vaccinated for COVID-19. Her Baltimore-based organization, Centro SOL, is part of an effort called CEAL designed by the National Institutes of Health to address barriers preventing COVID-19 vaccination in communities of color.

Bloomberg American Health Summit



The 2021 Bloomberg American Health Summit, held virtually for the second year because of the pandemic, was attended by **2,290** people. Attendance for the event, which centered around the theme “Public Health Visible,” was more than double from the year before.

The Summit addressed a broad range of public health issues, including attacks on public health officials, public health equity and what the pandemic taught us about the importance of data in solving public health problems.

Speakers included Admiral **Rachel L. Levine**, Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services who gave an inspirational speech that talked about not only challenges the pandemic presented, but the opportunities that arose from it. **Lisa Hamilton**, President and CEO of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, spoke about the need for an extended child tax credit and **Nicole Lurie**, U.S. Director of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, talked about how to prepare now for the next big public health disaster. The Rev. **Dr. Howard-John Wesley** of Alfred Street Baptist Church delivered a keynote on confronting racism in the pursuit of public health.



Also, during the event, Michael Bloomberg announced that Bloomberg Philanthropies was making an additional five-year, **\$120 million** investment to help combat the overdose crisis. In addition to Pennsylvania and Michigan, the new resources will support Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Faculty at Johns Hopkins will be engaged in this work, alongside partners that include **Vital Strategies, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the CDC Foundation.**