



JOHNS HOPKINS  
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL  
*of* PUBLIC HEALTH

# **Bloomberg American Health Initiative**

2019 Annual Report





# Bloomberg American Health Initiative

## At a Glance

Through education, research and practice, the Bloomberg American Health Initiative works to tackle critical 21st-century challenges to health in the United States, aiming to improve health and save lives nationwide.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**\$300 Million**

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

**50**

Full-tuition scholarships for a Master of Public Health degree annually

**10**

Full-tuition scholarships for a Doctor of Public Health degree annually

### 5 AREAS OF FOCUS

Addiction & Overdose

Adolescent Health

Environmental Challenges

Obesity & The Food System

Violence

### 3 CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

**Equity**

**Evidence**

**Policy**

# Key 2019 Data Points



## FELLOWS

**80** MPH fellows from **29** states, DC, and the Mariana Islands, and **15** DrPH fellows.

## COLLABORATORS

**87** collaborating organizations from **30** states, DC, and the Mariana Islands. A majority are from nontraditional organizations including libraries, police departments, and agricultural extension programs.

## FACULTY

**6** Bloomberg Professors of American Health, in Adolescent Health, Environmental Challenges, Obesity and the Food System, and Violence.

<b>Tamar Mendelson</b>	Adolescent Health
<b>Aisha Dickerson</b>	Environmental Challenges
<b>Shima Hamidi</b>	Environmental Challenges (appointed Jan. 1, 2020)
<b>Yeeli Mui</b>	Environmental Challenges
<b>Melissa Walls</b>	Obesity & the Food System
<b>Daniel Webster</b>	Violence

## COURSES

Supported the development of **14** new courses, taken by **1,383** students so far.

## EVENTS

Sponsored **21** events on campus, a gun policy event at the Newseum in DC, and the 2nd annual Bloomberg American Health Summit, attended by more than **350** people, in downtown Baltimore.

## PROJECTS

Supported **16** new community partnerships, **6** public sector consultations, and **6** new research grants in academic year 2018-2019. Three high-impact project websites engaged **13,679** users.

# Addiction & Overdose

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## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Fentanyl study spurs life-saving drug checking initiatives

In 2019, the groundbreaking FORECAST study by **Professor Susan Sherman and Traci L. Green** of Brandeis University on the effectiveness of inexpensive testing strips in detecting deadly fentanyl continued to **inform policy and policymakers about drug-checking as a means to reduce opioid overdose deaths**. The study helped inform the **purchase of drug checking machines in Chicago and Boston**. With Initiative funding, study co-author Ju Park provided **expertise to Delaware's fentanyl test strip pilot program**, which distributed an estimated **5,000 test strips** between November 2018 and the end of 2019.

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### JHU lends expertise to tackle overdose in Baltimore County

In November, the **Baltimore County Opioid Response Working Group** released a final report detailing a **new strategy to reduce opioid overdoses and deaths** in Baltimore County, which experienced more than 350 overdose deaths in 2018. **Associate Director Michelle Spencer** served on the working group itself; Initiative staff, including **Bloomberg Fellow Elise Andrews** and **Director Joshua Sharfstein**, provided support.

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### Researcher's methodology helps curtail HIV spread in W.Va.

As part of his innovative high-impact project, **Assistant Scientist Sean Allen** helped health officials in Cabell County, West Virginia, **count the number of people who inject drugs**; his research also **informed the county's response to a recent HIV outbreak**. Now, Dr. Allen is assisting West Virginia's Berkeley County with its own count of the number of people who inject drugs, and has a grant pending to **conduct the study in five contiguous counties** in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. This summer, he will return to Cabell County to **replicate the original study** and assess changes since 2018.

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### Team studies punitive approach to drug use, pregnancy

State laws have increasingly turned to **punishing pregnant women who use illicit drugs**; proponents of these policies see them as effective deterrents, but public health experts say they **prevent women from seeking medical care**. A team led by **Associate Professor Beth McGinty** is mapping out such laws across all 50 states and **studying their impact on addiction treatment in pregnancy, child welfare referral, and pregnancy/birth outcomes**. Her work will play a critical role in developing a **public health approach to policies around substance use disorder in pregnancy**.

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# Addiction & Overdose

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### How big data can predict opioid overdose risk



The symposium “**Using Big Data to Combat the Opioid Epidemic**” explored insights from a **new data-driven model to predict opioid overdose risk in Maryland** — a state that has consistently seen one of the nation’s highest opioid overdose death rates. Developed by a study team at Johns Hopkins, the model **links criminal justice and health data** to identify those most at risk of overdose and who would benefit from life-saving interventions. Similar efforts have since been **launched in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania**.

## EDUCATION

### Fellow spearheads Hep C peer education in Pittsburgh

With Initiative support, **Bloomberg Fellow Sarah Danforth Eaton** established a **peer group for Hepatitis C education** through the syringe exchange program at Prevention Point Pittsburgh, where she is Harm Reduction Specialist. **More than 180 participants** have shared and learned ways to prevent, test for, and treat Hepatitis C. The Initiative also funded Prevention Point Pittsburgh’s **evaluation of its wound care project**, leading it to scale up wound care services; now, **3,000 more people** who inject drugs could potentially receive these services.



“I want to transform our needle exchange program into a place where the people who utilize our services feel they have something to share, teach, and give back to the people around them.”

— **Bloomberg Fellow Sarah Danforth Eaton**

## Courses

- Epidemiology of Substance Abuse
- Evidence Base for Harm Reduction
- Public Health Perspectives on U.S. Drug Policy
- The Opioid Crisis: Problem Solving Course



# Adolescent Health

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE



### JHU offers expertise to positively impact youth in Baltimore — and beyond

With Initiative support, the Center for Adolescent Health — led by **Tamar Mendelson, Bloomberg Professor of American Health** — is developing a digital toolkit for youth-serving organizations on how to **create and sustain a youth advisory board**; members of the Center’s youth advisory board and HeartSmiles, its partner organization, are contributing. The Center is also investigating the **impact of participating in Baltimore’s job training initiative, Grads2Careers**, on young people’s physical and mental health and employment outcomes over a 2-year period, and is supporting the Granny Project, a **youth-developed initiative to connect young people with grandmothers** around cooking healthy meals.

In September, the Center and the Initiative co-sponsored “**Empowering Opportunity Youth Through Work Experiences**,” a half-day meeting focused on “**opportunity youth**” — a term for those once referred to as “at-risk” youth. Attendees included **keynote speaker Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, the 20th United States Surgeon General**, as well as Baltimore businesses **willing to support young people with training and employment**.



“Employers need your talent and the skills, innovation, and ideas you can bring to the economy or marketplace. We can’t afford to leave anyone out.”

— **U.S. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams in his keynote address**

# Adolescent Health

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Project empowers young women at risk

**Associate professor Terri Powell's** project focused on female adolescents engaged with Youth Opportunities (YO!) Baltimore, which provides comprehensive services to **youth ages 16 to 24 who are not working or in school**. These young women were involved in sex trafficking, rapid repeat pregnancies, and abusive relationships. The project engaged **18 young women over 6 weeks of positive social programming** — imparting life skills for **leadership development and personal growth** and creating a supportive social network.

### Study looks at effects of relocation on youth

**Assistant professor Sabriya Linton** is comparing the impact of **relocating from or remaining in redeveloping neighborhoods on youth** educational performance, behavior, mental health, and substance use. In collaboration with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, Linton is using Photovoice, a qualitative technique that trains participants to share their stories via photography, to **capture the housing conditions experienced by young people**.

## EDUCATION

### Facilitating recovery for traumatized youth

**Bloomberg Fellow Jasmine Calhoun** directs the Youth Protection Council's Innerlink Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter in Saginaw, Michigan, a 24-hour, 365-day emergency shelter and transitional living program for youth ages 12 to 21. Jasmine works closely with **young people who have experienced trauma** — facilitating their recovery and promoting their social and emotional wellbeing. With Initiative funding, Jasmine organized a wellness symposium for Saginaw youth and their families, connecting them with **free, healthy food and physical and mental health resources**.



“As a champion for homeless, runaway, sex- and labor-trafficked, abused, and neglected youth, equipped with the new set of skills, tools, and knowledge provided by the Bloomberg Fellows Program, I will continue to make a difference in the lives of adolescents at risk — right here in my own backyard.”

— **Bloomberg Fellow Jasmine Calhoun**

### Courses

- Promoting Equity for Adolescents and Emerging Adults: Problem Solving Seminar







# Obesity & the Food System

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Professor drafts ‘blueprint’ to address Baltimore youth’s food insecurity

**Associate Professor Kristin Mmari** led an assessment of food insecurity among Baltimore youth, finding that nearly **half of the study sample was food insecure**, and that engaging in risky behavior, e.g. prostitution and selling drugs, to obtain food was very common. The Baltimore City Office of Planning requested that Mmari **create a “blueprint” for how Baltimore can address adolescent food insecurity**. Created in collaboration with Family League of Baltimore, that blueprint is now being **implemented in Baltimore and has spawned additional related projects**.



“Food insecurity is a critical yet poorly understood problem for adolescents in low-income contexts that can lead to risky health behaviors with serious long-term effects. We anticipate that this blueprint can serve as an example for other urban areas to address food insecurity among adolescents.”

— **Associate Professor Kristin Mmari**

### Expert advice to increase access to healthy food

For more than a decade, **Professor Joel Gittelsohn** has worked with the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, which **uses food to address economic, environmental, and health disparities** in areas where residents struggle to access healthy food; his research has driven a number of the city’s policy decisions. Dr. Gittelsohn is consulting on a \$250,000 annual grant to **improve Baltimore’s small food retail environment**, including corner store infrastructure improvements, a food store systems simulation model, and a study of resilience to food shortages and disasters.

### JHU resources strengthen local efforts to improve food policy

The Center for a Livable Future maintains an online Food Policy Networks repository of resources for food policy councils; an increasing number of these groups across the country are working to **increase equitable access to healthy foods and strengthen local and regional food systems**. **Senior research associate Anne Palmer** is leading a consultation with the Madison Food Policy Council, to help create a governance structure and invite community participation, with a goal of **increasing equity and community engagement**.







# Initiative's Cross-Cutting Work

The Initiative's work explores intersecting focus areas and themes. Some examples:

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Bloomberg American Health Summit gathers thought leaders

In November, more than 350 researchers, policymakers, and advocates from more than 45 cities gathered in Baltimore for the **second annual Bloomberg American Health Summit**. The two-day event **highlighted new knowledge and best practices** in the Initiative's five focus areas, and provided opportunities for Bloomberg Fellows to build skills and network. Social media reached a potential audience of 3.75M.





