



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

# Environmental Challenges

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Researchers' goal: Safe drinking water in Baltimore

**Assistant Scientist Natalie Exum** and colleagues established a partnership with the Baltimore City Department of Public Works to **ensure continued delivery of high-quality drinking water** to all Baltimore residents. The researchers are working to identify who is at **increased risk of exposure to contaminated drinking water** due to extreme weather events. They are also **testing the quality of drinking water at the tap** in East Baltimore for fluctuations in quality, and gauging the impact on residents, workers, and patients at Johns Hopkins Hospital.



“The provision of safe drinking water supplies in the Baltimore metropolitan area is a matter of equity that cuts across socio-economic classes.”

— **Assistant scientist Natalie Exum**



### Measuring the benefits of trails for diverse communities

The proposed **Baltimore Greenway Trails network** would be a 35-mile loop around Baltimore City, providing opportunities for transportation and recreation. A project like this can provide health benefits to a community, but are these benefits **equitably distributed to people at different socioeconomic levels**? **Craig Pollack, associate professor; Daniel Hindman, internal medicine fellow at Johns Hopkins Hospital; and Keshia Pollack-Porter, professor,** are working with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to investigate perspectives on the proposed trail system within two historic communities of color, under the premise that **positively engaging these communities in planning and implementation** could minimize unintended consequences and increase their use of the trail.



# Environmental Challenges

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Help for Puerto Rico, post-hurricane

After Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, a group of Johns Hopkins physicians, engineers, and public health practitioners formed **Puerto Rico Stands**, to support the island's long-term recovery. **PhD candidate Yonaira Rivera** led the creation of a project plan focusing on the rural community of Sector Maná, which the hurricane had hit especially hard. The project report was used by community partners to **develop an online platform that connects volunteer organizations with families and communities in need**; Americorps is also supplying funding for the platform.

## EDUCATION

### Fellow looks to reduce childhood injuries in DC

As a pediatric emergency medicine physician at Children's National Health System in Washington, D.C., **Bloomberg Fellow Sadiqa Kendi** is dedicated to helping children and their families when they are injured. As medical director of Safe Kids DC, she is committed to finding ways to **prevent unintentional childhood injuries from happening** in the first place. Sadiqa is focused on improving Washington, D.C.'s built environment — from the playgrounds and homes to neighborhoods and intersections — to **reduce pediatric injury and death**.



“The Emergency Department is a safety net for everyone. We see and treat whoever walks through the door. However, I was unsatisfied with helping one patient at a time. It felt like there was more work to be done, and I knew that I could impact larger populations as a public health professional.”

— **Bloomberg Fellow Sadiqa Kendi**

#### Seminars

- It Takes a Healthy Village: Integrating Urban Planning and Public Health to Tackle Environmental Challenges
- Towards a Green and Healthy Built Environment: The Australian Perspective

#### Courses

- One Health Tools to Promote and Evaluate Healthy and Sustainable Communities

# 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**.

# Obesity & the Food System

## EDUCATION

### Fellow tackles health and the food system in North Texas

In North Texas, communities experience food insecurity at rates that exceed the 2017 national average of 12%; in Dallas, the rate was nearly 23%. The **connection between access to healthy food and chronic disease** is at the heart of **Bloomberg Fellow Ashley Hickson's** work; she is the Regional Community Impact Director for the American Heart Association, where among her projects is bringing to North Texas the benefits of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a public-private partnership that **brings healthy food retailers to underserved communities**.



“Obesity and inadequate food systems overwhelmingly impact communities across the country. As an individual who was reared in one of those communities, I feel it is my obligation as a public health practitioner to utilize the resources and knowledge within my reach to positively impact health outcomes for the nation’s most vulnerable.”

— **Bloomberg Fellow Ashley Hickson**

### Courses

- Applying Systems Thinking to Obesity
- The Obesity Epidemic Problem Solving Seminar: What We Can Learn from Native American Communities

# Violence

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### ERPO project informs state implementation efforts

The **Extreme Risk Protection Order project** continues to inform policy discussions in multiple states considering new ERPO laws, which allow guns to be temporarily removed from a person at risk of harm to self or others through a civil process. **Associate Professor Shannon Frattaroli and Associate Josh Horwitz** argued in an op-ed in *The Hill* that **protection laws and federal funding can prevent gun violence**. The 2013 meeting that led to the development of ERPOs continues to bear fruit, influencing **ERPO efforts in such states as Colorado and Illinois** and **enabling knowledge-sharing** among the four states currently implementing ERPOs (California, Florida, Maryland, and Washington).



“When I look at the landscape of gun violence prevention policy in this country and the possibilities for progress, I’m very hopeful. By bringing science to policy, we’re getting good laws that are making a difference in our communities every day.”

— Associate Professor Shannon Frattaroli

### Center for Gun Policy and Research offers critical leadership, resources

Under the leadership of **Bloomberg Professor of American Health Daniel Webster**, the Center for Gun Policy and Research published the findings of a **national survey on public support for more than two dozen gun violence prevention policies**, as well as a white paper and infographic on **handgun purchase licensing**. It offered the first Summer Youth Institute on Reducing Gun Violence in America, with 51 teens from 22 states, and **two new online courses that reached thousands**. Webster participated in two collaborations focused on **gun violence prevention and policing and criminal justice reform**, associated with the Joyce Foundation.

### Gun violence forum highlights evidence-based solutions



On September 23, the American Public Health Association and the Initiative co-hosted “**Policies That Work to Reduce Gun Violence**.” This half-day forum, held at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., **highlighted the most up-to-date evidence on gun violence prevention and elevated the best research on strategies to reduce deaths and injuries stemming from gun violence**. The **#gunpolicieshatwork** hashtag trended in D.C. during the forum, and the Initiative’s tweets received nearly 25,000 impressions.

# Violence

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## RESEARCH & PRACTICE

### Study explores new territory of intimate partner violence

More than 36% of U.S. women have experienced intimate partner violence, yet men’s perspectives on IPV are not well-understood, which is a challenge for effective violence prevention. **Assistant Professor Charvonne Holliday** is exploring **men’s perceptions of reproductive coercion**, a form of intimate partner violence that affects 1 in 10 women nationally; her study is focused on Baltimore City, where prevalence can be as high as 1 in 4. The findings will help **inform the sexual violence curriculum for men** at House of Ruth Maryland, an intimate partner violence center.

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## EDUCATION

### Fellow spearheads grant award, growth in programming in MN

Since **Bloomberg Fellow Josh Peterson** joined the Minneapolis Health Department in 2013, he has broadened and deepened the department’s violence prevention efforts. He garnered a **\$1.7 million violence prevention grant** from the CDC, expanded the department’s programs for **parents of at-risk adolescents**, and resurrected a **hospital-based violence intervention program**, in addition to engaging in policy and research efforts. With Initiative support, he launched the effort to **create an Office of Violence Prevention** within the health department.



“I want to innovate upstream to focus more on the community and societal levels of the social-ecological model. I aspire to lead deeper conversations, to answer harder questions, and to think bigger about how we can cure violence.”

— **Bloomberg Fellow Josh Peterson**

#### Seminars

- Overburdened and Underserved: Evidence-based Approaches to Addressing Inequities in Gender-based Violence and Response in the U.S.
- Mass Incarceration, Violence and Health Equity
- Understanding and Preventing Community-Level Gun Violence

#### Courses

- Suicide Prevention: Problem Solving Seminar

# 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.



# Initiative's Cross-Cutting Work

## RESEARCH & PRACTICE



## Working toward improved maternal health outcomes

While global maternal mortality rates declined significantly between 1990 and 2015, the U.S. rate increased, from 17 deaths per 100,000 births to 26 deaths per 100,000 births. In 2019, New Jersey — among the lowest-performing states in terms of maternal health outcomes — released its **first-ever annual Report Card of Hospital Maternity Care**. This public report card is designed to **increase accountability and spur improvements in care** at hospitals across the state. The Initiative supported **Associate Professor Andreea Creanga** in advising the state on how to develop the report card, and dedicated a plenary session at the 2019 Summit to the topic.

Maternal mortality rates for black women are three to four times those of white women. In February, the Initiative co-sponsored “**The Fierce Urgency of Now**,” a special health equity symposium centered on **eliminating racial disparities in maternal health**. It was held in honor of Dr. Shalon Irving, a Hopkins graduate who died three weeks after giving birth.

## EDUCATION

### Courses

- Critical Issues in Health Disparities
- Innovative Methods in Health Equity Research
- Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) to Promote Health Equity in the Major BAHl Public Health Challenges

### Special seminar series co-hosted with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity

- Community Health Worker Intervention in the Emergency Department
- Achieving Health Equity Together
- Housing as a Social Determinant of Kidney Disease Outcomes
- Building a Community-Academic Partnership
- Leveraging Needs and Stakeholder-Driven Innovation to Enable Equity in Eye Care