

Advocacy Week 2021 at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA)

By Victoria Goldman, MD and Bethany Burdick, MD, MPH

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in over a year of virtual learning, as well as changes in how we view education. In response, the second-year pediatric residency class at the Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) selected a longitudinal advocacy focus on educational disparities in public schools.

More than 6.5 million school age children miss more than 15 school days per year. California data show one in ten students were chronically absent in 2019.^{1,2} There is extensive literature linking chronic absenteeism and childhood health outcomes, as well as links between educational attainment and adult health outcomes.^{1,3-7} Accordingly, pediatric providers have the opportunity to play a critical role.

The class advocacy group, led by residents Dr. Victoria Goldman and Dr. Bethany Burdick, hosted an Advocacy Week in August 2021 to raise awareness and provide education and tools to address these issues. This event consisted of speaker events, social media advocacy, as well as new handouts and screenings regarding school absenteeism for patients and families.

We hosted Grand Rounds with three expert panelists on educational disparities and chronic absenteeism, including: Ty Anthony Davis, Maryjane Puffer, and Dr. Rebecca Dudovitz. Additionally, residents Dr. Gabriella Rader and Dr. Katherine Rand spearheaded a social media takeover of AAP District IX Chapter 2’s Instagram account (@AAPCA2), where we featured four important legislative bills from the California State Assembly (AB 22, AB 309, AB 563, AB 1117), as well as further information regarding chronic absenteeism.

In our outpatient clinics, resident physician Dr. Gabriella Puente created English and Spanish parent handouts on the health impacts of chronic absenteeism, and Dr. Goldman created and implemented new screening for school absences. In addition, we provided morning advocacy updates to our residency, and Dr. Jelena Ivanis orchestrated resident-led education on the link between health and school in our clinics. Dr. Goldman and Dr. Burdick look forward to exploring opportunities to work toward addressing educational disparities through increased communication and relationships between CHLA, our local community, and schools.



Victoria Goldman, MD, is a second-year pediatric resident at the Children’s Hospital Los Angeles where she is in the Community Health Impact track. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania in Public Health and medical degree from Brown University. She received the 2021 AAP Advocacy Training Grant and the 2021 CHLA Gary F. Krieger Award for Pediatric

Advocacy to continue to facilitate her interest and work on educational disparities. She plans to pursue a pediatric fellowship after completion of residency and currently has a strong interest in endocrinology. She enjoys hiking in the Angeles National Forest and exploring the awesome restaurants in LA. Contact: vigoldman@chla.usc.edu



Bethany Burdick, MD, MPH is a current second-year pediatric resident at the Children's Hospital Los Angeles. She is in the Community Health Impact track, and her project focuses on health education with a partner community school. She received her medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine and her Master's in Public Health at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Prior to medical school, she was a high school biology teacher in San Antonio. She plans to pursue General Pediatrics after completion of residency. She enjoys visiting the beaches of LA and taking her two dogs on walks. Contact: bburdick@chla.usc.edu

References:

1. Allison MA, Attisha E; Council on School Health. The Link Between School Attendance and Good Health. *Pediatrics*. 2019;143(2):e20183648. doi:10.1542/peds.2018-3648
2. Academic Engagement. California School Dashboard. Accessed August 24, 2021. <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/ca/2019/academic-engagement#chronic-absenteeism>.
3. Fiscella K, Kitzman H. Disparities in academic achievement and health: the intersection of child education and health policy. *Pediatrics*. 2009;123(3):1073-1080. doi:10.1542/peds.2008-0533
4. Stempel H, Cox-Martin M, Bronsert M, Dickinson LM, Allison MA. Chronic School Absenteeism and the Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences. *Acad Pediatr*. 2017;17(8):837-843. doi:10.1016/j.acap.2017.09.013
5. Bravender T. School performance: the pediatrician's role. *Clin Pediatr (Phila)*. 2008;47(6):535-545. doi:10.1177/0009922807313272
6. Taras H, Potts-Datema W. Chronic health conditions and student performance at school. *J Sch Health*. 2005;75(7):255-266. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2005.00034.x
7. Miech R, Pampel F, Kim J, Rogers RG. The Enduring Association between Education and Mortality: The Role of Widening and Narrowing Disparities. *Am Sociol Rev*. 2011;76(6):913-934. doi:10.1177/0003122411411276