



**Adolescent and Young Adult Health Research Network
Setting the Research Agenda:
Where Are We and Where Do We Need to Go?**

**RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS TO GUIDE
THE ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT HEALTH NETWORK**

A developmental science framework to inform conceptualization, assessment and measurement of clinical interventions aiming to improve the health of adolescents and young adults

We set this broad framework to examine how the transitions into adolescence (marked by the biological onset of puberty) and young adulthood (a predominantly social transition) influence the impact of various clinical prevention and intervention strategies. This framework also explores the social and environmental context of these developmental transitions including the increasing role of technology in the lives of young people – as levers for promoting health and increasing opportunities for risk taking behavior. The themes below help to flesh out an agenda for the AYAH Research Network’s priorities in health care research and guide efforts to translate developmental science research into clinical practice. This research agenda will inform a guiding framework to enhance adolescent health clinical care models.

Recommendation: Use advances in developmental science to inform improved models of care and brief interventions for adolescents and young adults.

Clinical Interventions: Given the limited time that adolescents/young adults spend in a clinical setting, focus on how to best leverage that time. Use developmentally-informed models to develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate:

- Effective, brief, practical, innovative developmentally aligned **interventions** including:
 - Targeting multiple issues, mediators, and specific behaviors (e.g., sleep, eating)
 - Deepening our understanding of behavior change including the framing and timing of health information and messages
 - Integrating principles of gamification and maximizing use of technology
 - Identifying strategies that are most effective at different stages of development and tailored to developmental stages
 - Tailoring interventions to specific clinical settings and special populations, (e.g., youth with chronic conditions, transgender youth and incarcerated youth)
 - Developing criteria for publishing/reporting on intervention outcomes and how evidence-based principles are applied (e.g., What is in the “black box” of behavior change)
 - Expanding outcome criteria beyond disease prevention outcomes to include positive function and development
- Improved models for a preventive care visit, including – but not limited to – incorporating evidence-based recommendations and integrating youth priorities. Models reflect both content and timing of visits to leverage developmental points
- Use of technology to enhance/improve adolescent health services (e.g., for clinicians, youth, and integrated systems)

- Applications of motivational interviewing
- Assessment and screening models that lead to specific action steps in the clinic setting
- Interventions that provide adolescents/young adults with guidance in navigating complex systems that are providing health information (e.g., online sites, social networks, etc.)
- Leveraging technology to support these efforts as appropriate
- Training models to improve clinician skills for taking care of young adults

Parent Engagement: Support parents in providing scaffolding/support that allows appropriate risks and failures for AYAs across development.

- Clarify a role for clinicians to support parent engagement that is consistent with need for confidential care
- We need additional neurodevelopment research on adolescent cortisol systems and developmental responses to parents to inform parent interventions

Transition into Adulthood: Develop a science informed model on the trajectory from adolescence into young adulthood.

- Clarify how what happens in adolescence relates to what happens in young adulthood (e.g., timing for affective learning, importance of experience – successes and failures)
- Outline the types of supports and scaffolding necessary to move youth through the transitions of adolescence and youth adulthood, including how trajectories differ for different populations, such as immigrant youth, and youth in the foster care system
- Identify how the onset of behavioral health issues shapes trajectories in adolescent and young adult populations

Structural Changes/Interventions: Identify models to improve alignment/linkages between the needs of adolescents and young adults and the health care system.

- Establish and evaluate models for developmentally appropriate integrated health care teams for adolescents/YA (rather than utilizing models from adult systems)
 - Develop a tool/measure to guide and assess integration (particular focus on emotional/physical health)
 - Develop systems that reflect patterns of emergence of behavioral health issues during adolescence and young adulthood
 - Develop policies and procedures for better engaging parents at different developmental stages
- Conceptualize financing systems that support developmentally appropriate integrative, collaborative care
- Create a nimbler and more responsive clinical model in order to respond to shifting context for clinical services (e.g., vaccinations and other preventive health offered outside clinic offices)
- Create funding mechanisms that support nimble clinical models while maintain rigor
- Clarify the role of the health care system in supporting adolescents and their parents with healthy developmental transitions

This framework was developed by the Adolescent and Young Adult Health Research Network in 2016.