

NEUROBIOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND ITS APPLICATIONS

Statement of Task:

An ad hoc committee will examine the neurobiological and socio-behavioral science of adolescent development, health, well-being, resilience, and agency including the science of positive youth development. The committee will also focus on how this knowledge can be applied to institutions and systems so that adolescent well-being, resilience, and development are promoted and that systems address structural barriers and inequalities in opportunity and access. The study will aim to build off the first study in the National Academy of Medicine's Culture of Health study series and outline the implications of developmental interactions with the social distribution of risks and resources identified in the first study, *Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity*.

As appropriate to their review, the study committee will make evidence-driven recommendations to key stakeholders serving adolescents and their families including government agencies and community institutions; federal, state, and local policymakers who guide allocation of resources; and the research community. The committee will highlight promising models, opportunities for translations, potential policy areas to better support adolescents, and will identify 3-5 research gaps. The committee will also work with a communications consultant throughout the process to identify and communicate key messages.

The committee will explore:

1. What are the unique neurobiological and socio-behavioral characteristics in adolescence that make this a period of unique opportunity for positive developmental trajectories? Adolescence has largely been seen as a time of heightened risk and poor decision-making; however, emerging research suggests that adolescence, especially the adaptive flexibility of adolescents, is also a period of opportunity for learning and skill acquisition. How can these opportunities be maximized and harmful risks mitigated?
2. Recognizing that development begins early in life; how do early life conditions, including supports and adversity, shape adolescent development? What is the role of the adolescent agency? What does science tell us about our ability, during the adolescent period, to mediate past developmental challenges?
3. As outlined in the report, *Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity* areas of potential structural inequities (p. 7), include: intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic mechanisms that guide allocation of resources along the lines of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, gender expression, and other dimensions of individual and group identity. Of these, which ones are particularly important in supporting or threatening positive adolescent development? What role does historical trauma play in health and development?
4. What does the science suggest about how systems (e.g., health, justice, education/higher education, child welfare) could be changed to improve the process and outcomes of adolescent development? How can systems recognize and support resilience, and promote adolescent agency and the development of positive youth assets to improve their services?