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ARIZONA ALLIANCE FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH ISSUES FIRST-EVER STATUS REPORT ON THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ARIZONA'S YOUTH

Snapshot of Physical, Emotional, Social, Economic, Environmental Health; "Our Youth Are Counting On Us": Dr. Veenod Chulani, Adolescent Medical Specialist

PHOENIX, Ariz. (April 15, 2024): The [Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health \(The Alliance\)](#), a program of [Affirm](#), Arizona's designated Title X (Ten) agency, has issued the first-ever report on the health and wellbeing of Arizona's youth. **The State of Adolescent Health in Arizona** is the result of extensive research, thoughtful deliberation and collaboration among key stakeholders and Alliance organizational partners.

The report presents indicators in the following domains to broadly describe the state of adolescent health in Arizona: Health and Wellness, Education and Workforce Development, Family and Community, Environment and Climate, and Economic Wellbeing. Together, they reflect how complex interactions between youth and their social, cultural, economic, and physical environments influence their health and development.

"In combination, the research highlights the interconnectedness of systems that youth interact with and the critical need for cross-sectoral interventions to effectively advance adolescent health," said Affirm Adolescent Health Program Supervisor Tracy Pedrotti, who manages The Alliance with support from Organizational Partners including the [Arizona Public Health Association](#), [Children's Action Alliance](#), [Rising Youth Theatre](#), and the [American Academy of Pediatrics Arizona Chapter](#).

"This inaugural report aims to provide a comprehensive overview from various data sets that, on their own, may be more narrowly focused or limited by evaluation criteria. The information presented emphasizes the critical significance of analyzing data to inform systems change that will improve health outcomes and advance equity for Arizona's adolescents" said Pedrotti.

The data presented in this report comes from studies done between 2020-2022, focused on youth ages 12-17, with a few exceptions. Report highlights include:

Health and Wellness – Physical Health

- Only 63% of adolescents had a preventative medical visit in the past year.
- 58% of adolescents did not have a chance to speak with their provider privately.

Health and Wellness – Mental Health

- 27% of adolescents had a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem with less than half receiving treatment or counseling. Arizona ranked among the bottom 5 states for youth with a major depressive episode who did not receive mental health treatment.

Health and Wellness – Sexual and Reproductive Health

- More than 91% of Arizona adolescents did not use a condom or birth control during their most recent sexual intercourse.
- Adolescent females were four times more likely to experience sexual violence compared to their male peers.

Education and Workforce Development

- More than two-thirds of fourth graders were not reading at their grade level.
- Nearly 121,000 youth and young adults in Arizona between 16-24 years were disconnected from school and work. Youth of color are represented in the group, reflecting systemic inequities that hinder their engagement in education or employment opportunities.

Environment and Climate

- Nearly 85% of Arizonans live in areas with poor air quality, ranking among the worst in the nation.
- Nearly one-third of the Navajo Nation population does not have access to clean, reliable drinking water.

Economic Wellbeing

- Nearly a third of Arizona's adolescents live in households that can't always afford to eat healthy foods.
- 21% of Arizona's adolescents live in poverty, outpacing the national average and impacting racial/ethnic minorities at greater rates.

Family and Community

- Less than three-quarters of high school students considered themselves "safe" at school, with more than 1 in 4 having experienced bullying.
- Nearly three-quarters of Arizona's LGBTQ youth experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity in the previous year.

The report also provided insight into what teens are saying:

- "Sexual education is considered taboo. There's a lack of support about reproductive and sexual health services."
- "Rural communities often lack accessible resources and bilingual staff."
- "Youth would benefit from accurate [sexual health] information."

"The array of indicators in this report provides a unique snapshot of the health status of Arizona's youth. They also provide a mechanism to track changes, which aids in policy and program planning, analysis and evaluation," said Dr. Veenod Chulani, Founding Member of The Alliance and one of just a few adolescent medicine specialists in Arizona. "I fervently hope that knowing how our youth are faring on measures of physical, emotional, social, economic and environmental health spurs reflection, dialogue and our collective action. Because our youth are counting on us."

To view the full report and for more information about the Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health, visit www.healthzyouth.org. For more information about Affirm, visit www.affirmaz.org.

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About The Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health: The Arizona Alliance for Adolescent Health, a program of **Affirm**, is a statewide coalition of medical, behavioral, and social service professionals who are committed to improving adolescent health outcomes by expanding access to high quality healthcare and social services and improving coordination of care and service delivery across these systems.

About Affirm: **Affirm** (formerly Arizona Family Health Partnership) is a 50-year-old nonprofit organization that coordinates Arizona's Title X (ten) grant to connect clients to caring providers, offer inclusive health education, and advocate for evidence-based health policy at every level of government. **Affirm** is dedicated to making sexual and reproductive healthcare accessible, particularly for those who have been systematically excluded from receiving care. **Affirm** also implements the University of Michigan's Adolescent Champion Model in Arizona to create more youth-friendly healthcare environments. For more information about **Affirm** or to find a nearby Title X health center, visit www.affirmaz.org.