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February 6, 2018

Ci3's new article in the Journal of School Health: Youth consider mobile health units a private and safe place to receive sexual health and contraceptive services

(Chicago) A recent study published in the Journal of School Health by researchers at the University of Chicago's Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation (Ci3) in Sexual and Reproductive Health describes providing sexual and reproductive health care in a mobile health unit: "Mobile SRHC". This study found that providing sexual and reproductive health services on a mobile unit is a feasible approach for helping adolescents access sexual and reproductive health services.

More than 2,000 mobile health units (MHUs) are active in the United States, providing a portable and convenient method for bringing health care to communities. [Nearly 4 in 10 adolescents ages 15-19 years are sexually experienced](#) and despite being at an all-time low, teenage birth rates in the United States [still exceed those of other high income, developed countries](#). MHUs may be a viable opportunity to reach adolescents in their own communities and provide sexual and reproductive health care, including contraception.

Published today in [the March 2018 issue the Journal of School Health](#), the study used a mixed methods, multi-phase design to develop implement and test this service delivery model for sexual and reproductive health care with UChicago Medicine's Comer Children's MHU. Researchers conducted key informant interviews with MHU providers and a needs assessment survey with adolescent MHU users. They found that MHU providers held positive attitudes toward implementing Mobile SRHC into their practices. Additionally, the majority of the surveyed youth indicated that they were interested in learning about sexual health (66.0%) and over half expressed a likelihood of obtaining birth control (54.5%) on an MHU.

In this study, the researchers trained MHU providers to provide contraceptive counseling and helped the MHU integrate emergency contraception, oral contraceptive pills, and depot-medroxyprogesterone (also known as "the shot") into the MHU's existing services. Researchers surveyed 123 predominantly Black and Latino adolescents ages 14 to 21 years old from Chicago's South and West sides about their experiences using Mobile SRHC. Ninety-two percent (92%) of Mobile SRHC participants reported they would recommend the MHU to friends, while 88% found it to be private, and 93% found it as a safe place to obtain SRHC care.

The study has important implications for both clinical and community health care settings because:

- The majority of Mobile SRHC users felt safe, private and free from coercion by providers to make SRHC decisions
- Adolescents lack awareness of SRHC and contraceptives, however Mobile SRHC helped to address the need for more contraceptive education
- MHU providers were interested in obtaining contraceptive and health care training in order to provide SRHC

Findings from [this study](#) are now informing a large-scale project led by Ci3's Design Thinking Lab in which adolescents and clinicians are informing future service design for reproductive health care on the MHU.

To review the full publication, click [here](#). This research was supported by the Fellowship in Family Planning.

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Founded in 2012, Ci3 is an award-winning research center at the University of Chicago. Ci3 envisions a world in which all youth emerge into adulthood with agency over their bodies and futures. As such, we are committed to empowering young people, conducting innovative research, and uncovering opportunities for policy and systemic change. Ci3 houses three labs: the Game Changer Chicago Design Lab, the Transmedia Story Lab, and the Design Thinking Lab. Through these labs, Ci3's interdisciplinary team of medical providers, public health scholars, policy researchers, designers, and artists create games, digital narratives, and interventions with and for youth. Developed with an eye towards scaling, each of our interventions can be implemented in settings across the Chicagoland area and beyond.

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