

State laws on teen privacy do not reflect pediatric standards of care

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Many state laws on consent and privacy for adolescents do not reflect

pediatric professional standards of care, according to a study published online May 9 in *Pediatrics*.

Marianne Sharko, M.D., from Weill Cornell Medicine/New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, and colleagues summarized [state laws](#) and regulations on minor consent for [health services](#), treatment of substance abuse, [prenatal care](#), [mental health care](#), contraceptive management, immunizations, sexually transmitted infection management, HIV testing and treatment, dental care, and sexual assault evaluation, and assessed consistencies in guidance by comparing these laws and regulations with the American Academy of Pediatrics evidence-based guidelines.

The researchers observed notable state-by-state variability in laws relating to consent for adolescent patients. No states had identical policies for all of the services. For example, all states had provisions for consent to management of sexually transmitted infections; however, specifications were variable in terms of the age and type of minor, whether HIV was included, and confidentiality protection. Medical societies have established provision of confidential care to the adolescent patient as a priority; however, the need to comply with state laws and regulations limits guidelines.

"This is a call to action to address this systemic policy issue in which state laws need to be aligned with best policies and brought closer in line with recommendations for best care," the authors write. "A nationwide effort to harmonize state laws would increase consistency in privacy protection for adolescents."

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