



## **New Online Tool Brings Insights from Developmental Science to Policymakers Helping Young People Thrive**

*Key takeaways from research could help policymakers and other professionals craft more effective approaches for youth*

LOS ANGELES, October 22, 2024—A new online tool released today by the [UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent](#) (CDA) aims to help policymakers create more effective policies to support young people. [STEPS for Youth](#) provides resources on adolescent brain and social development to help policymakers and other youth-focused professionals apply the science of adolescence in their work.

“We know from decades of research that adolescence—roughly ages 10 to 25—is a significant window for brain and social development,” said Adriana Galván, PhD, Co-Executive Director of UCLA CDA and director of UCLA’s Developmental Neuroscience Lab. “Policies and programs that support core development needs during these years can have powerful impacts on young people that carry over into adulthood.”

Understanding of adolescent brain development has grown rapidly over the past 20 years, as new technologies such as fMRI have enabled researchers to learn more about how adolescent brains differ from those of children and adults. These new understandings are [already leading to changes in laws](#) related to adolescents.

As the science continues to advance, there is a growing need for leaders who support young people to have access to accurate, up-to-date information about adolescent brain and behavioral development.

STEPS for Youth (STEPS stands for Science To Enhance Policy Success) provides this information through resources with actionable insights from science to help policymakers build their understanding of adolescent development and apply research-based approaches within policy and practice settings. The site features:

- A **“Check In”** that highlights key areas of development with science-informed questions to spark conversations and provide ideas for enhancing policies for youth
- A resource library with **fact sheets** on the developmental needs of adolescents and **spotlights** that provide deeper dives into how the science of adolescent brain and social development relates to specific policy and practice areas
- Links to blog posts, reports, and podcast episodes on topics ranging from youth mental health to the importance of sleep

“Science highlights certain experiences as being especially important for positive outcomes in adolescence,” said Andrew Fuligni, Co-Executive Director of UCLA CDA and Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at UCLA. “For example, we know that policies that ensure support for exploration, contribution, and strong relationships during these years can have a lasting benefit for our young people, particularly those in contact with the foster care or juvenile justice systems.”

UCLA CDA developed STEPS for Youth in partnership with [ChildFocus](#), a consulting group dedicated to supporting non-profits, government, and philanthropy in their work to advance the well-being of children, youth and families. Together, CDA and ChildFocus also worked with an advisory panel of experts in policy and programs for adolescence.

For more information, contact Meghan Forder at [meghanforder@ucla.edu](mailto:meghanforder@ucla.edu).

### **About the Center for the Developing Adolescent**

The Center for the Developing Adolescent works to equitably improve adolescent health, education, and well-being. We do this by building bridges between research, programs, and policy.

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