

2023

Annual Report to the Massachusetts
Department of Mental Health

30 YEARS

**iSPARC Turns 30: The Real World Impact
of Our Research Over the Past 30 Years**

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Executive Summary

We are grateful to the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) for its ongoing support of the Implementation Science and Practice Advances Research Center (iSPARC). iSPARC is a DMH Research Center of Excellence located within the Department of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School. In FY23, iSPARC continued to leverage DMH's investment to rapidly translate research findings into their implementation within best practices for individuals with lived experience, their families, and the providers who serve them across the Commonwealth.

FY23 was a year of great growth for iSPARC. Our Center continued to adapt to the changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic and not only sustained our work but began to flourish again. We welcomed six new members to our faculty — Ayorkor Gaba, Megan Kelly, Taber Lightbourne, Radley “Chris” Sheldrick, Brian Stevenson, and Martha Zimmermann. Additionally, we successfully recruited Spencer Lawson, Senior Research Scientist, to the Law & Psychiatry Research Program. With each new addition to our Center, we were attentive to engaging colleagues who embody the mission and values of iSPARC and DMH.



Dr. Ayorkor Gaba



Dr. Megan Kelly



Dr. Taber Lightbourne



Dr. Chris Sheldrick



Dr. Brian Stevenson



Dr. Martha Zimmermann



Dr. Spencer Lawson

iSPARC's Mission

iSPARC and DMH strive to support and meet the mental health needs of individuals across the lifespan to live, work, and meaningfully participate in their communities. We are fiercely committed to these values:

- Applying person-centered, family-focused, and trauma-informed approaches to our research;
- Developing, evaluating, and implementing evidence-based practices to ensure highest quality of care; and
- Promoting cultural and linguistic equity of mental health services and resources.

To practice these values, we conduct research in partnership with the people whose lives are most affected—individuals with lived experience, their families, and the providers who serve them—recognizing that those with lived experience have expertise that is essential to conduct impactful research and investigators without lived experience cannot provide that expertise.

iSPARC Faculty & Staff

In FY23, iSPARC made significant strides to build on our already strong foundation:



Managed a research portfolio totaling **\$11,346,921** in grants and contract funding



Submitted **21** new grant and contract proposals



Were awarded **11** new grants and contracts



Published **79** peer-reviewed journal articles



Submitted **64** peer-reviewed journal articles

iSPARC is home to investigators from the UMass Chan Medical School Departments of Psychiatry, Emergency Medicine, and Population & Quantitative Health Sciences (PQHS). Our PQHS partners contribute expertise in implementation research and public health research conducted by and for communities that have long been underrepresented as beneficiaries of evidence-based and promising services.

iSPARC faculty are nationally and internationally recognized for their research in:

- Psychosocial intervention development
- Implementation science
- Public services and supports
- Clubhouse and vocational rehabilitation models

- Forensic/legal and human rights issues
- Child, parent, and family mental health
- Transition age youth/young adults
- Perinatal mental health
- Deaf mental health and addiction treatment
- Addictions interventions
- Trauma informed care
- Social reintegration approaches

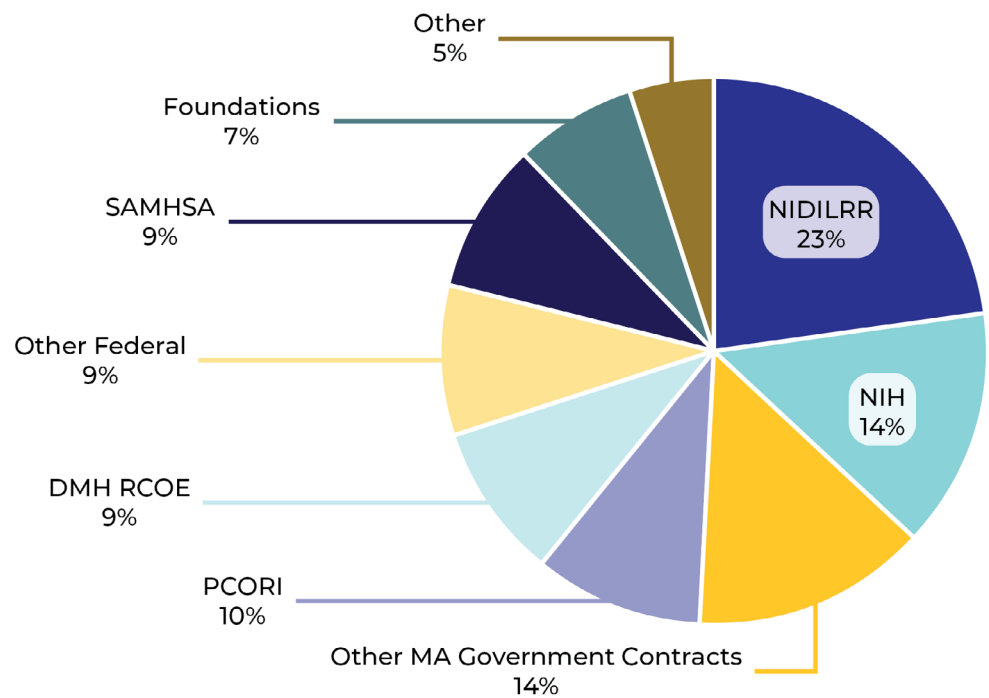
Internal to UMass Chan, we collaborate with investigators embedded in the Departments of Psychiatry, Population & Quantitative Health Sciences, Family Medicine & Community Health, Preventive & Behavioral Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Emergency Medicine, and Commonwealth Medicine. External to UMass Chan, we partner with investigators from other UMass campuses, Boston University, as well as national and international institutions to optimize our resources. These relationships enable us to build a bigger and stronger iSPARC to help meet the many challenges faced by DMH, those served by DMH, and the Commonwealth more broadly.

iSPARC Funding Sources FY 2023

The investment that DMH makes in its funding of iSPARC as a Research Center of Excellence provides an impressive return on this investment in the Commonwealth.

Every \$1 invested by DMH in FY23 yielded a return of \$10.37 to the Commonwealth to fund our portfolio of research, training, technical assistance, and service delivery.

Chart 1. Funding Sources




Top 5 Research Moments of FY23

We are very excited about the work we have done this fiscal year. The Top 5 we're most excited about are:

1. The American Psychiatric Association selected the *Psychiatric Services* journal article, "Established Outpatient Care and Follow-Up After Acute Psychiatric Service Use Among Youths and Young Adults", to highlight in a [press release](#) on October 12, 2022. The paper is based on a joint study between iSPARC and UMass Chan researchers Julie Hugunin, B.S. & Ph.D. candidate, **Maryann Davis, Ph.D., Celine Larkin, Ph.D., Jonggyu Baek, Ph.D., Brian Skehan, M.D., Ph.D., and Kate L. Lapane, Ph.D.** The article describes the study which involved patients, ages 12–27 with private insurance, who visited the emergency room or were hospitalized following an acute mental health event (such as major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders or phobias, or substance use disorder). The researchers looked at records of more than 95,000 hospitalizations and more than 100,000 emergency room visits by youth and young adults between 2013 and 2018. Learn more [here](#) on our website and find study recommendations [here](#).
2. **Kimberly Yonkers** is the principal investigator of the **Development of a Text Intervention for Perinatal Depression** project funded by the NIMH. This study will develop and conduct a preliminary test of a text messaging intervention that will reduce the risk of a major depressive episode and worsening depressive symptoms in perinatal individuals. The system will screen pregnant individuals, send tailored text messages with links to enhanced content, and will include a peer chat function. This accessible text platform will leverage both the ease of use inherent in text messages and the power of enhanced content drawn evidence from based behavioral interventions (Interpersonal Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).
3. In May 2022, **Ayorkor Gaba** was announced as a Scholar of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Program to Increase Diversity Among Individuals Engaged in Health-Related Research (PRIDE-CVD). In October 2022, she received an NHLBI PRIDE CVD Small Research Program grant to support the **Heart, Soul, & Recovery (HSR): Integrated Cardiovascular Risk Reduction, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care for African American/Black Men with Criminal Legal System Involvement** project. This project will utilize a community-engaged approach to culturally tailor an existing efficacious co-occurring disorder intervention to dually address CVD risk factors and co-occurring disorders among Black men with criminal legal involvement.
4. **Rajani Sadasivam** and Thomas Houston, Professor of General Internal Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, are co-principal investigators of the NIH-funded project, **Using Rural Community Paramedicine to Engage Lower-Motivated Smokers: Spreading an Effective mHealth-Assisted Intervention to Motivate Cessation**. In this five-year project, the investigators will conduct a "hybrid

type 2” study (i.e., a study with both implementation and effectiveness outcomes) to test: 1) two implementation programs in rural counties and 2) two smoker interventions. At the county-level, the implementation trial uses a novel multi-strategy implementation program centered around rural community paramedicine. At the individual level, this trial will target individuals living in these harder-to-reach rural areas. Engaging these smokers is possible using a brief abstinence game challenge and mHealth tools.

5. **Marsha Ellison and Colleen McKay** were awarded **Promoting Access, Inclusion, and Success of Students with Emotional Disturbance in Career and Technical Education**, a three-year NIDILRR Field Initiated Project. This project includes the revision and pilot testing of [*Translating Evidence to Support Transitions in Career and Technical Education \(TEST-CTE\)*](#) , a guide for special educators on how to promote CTE for special education students with emotional disturbance. The goals of the project are to: 1) revise the existing TEST-CTE guide to assure a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens; and 2) conduct a randomized pilot of TEST-CTE. The team will produce a revised TEST-CTE guide that assures cultural relevance for minority students and test study processes and outcomes. With these products, TEST-CTE will be positioned for a subsequent efficacy trial, one that holds promise for improved employment of youth with emotional disturbance.

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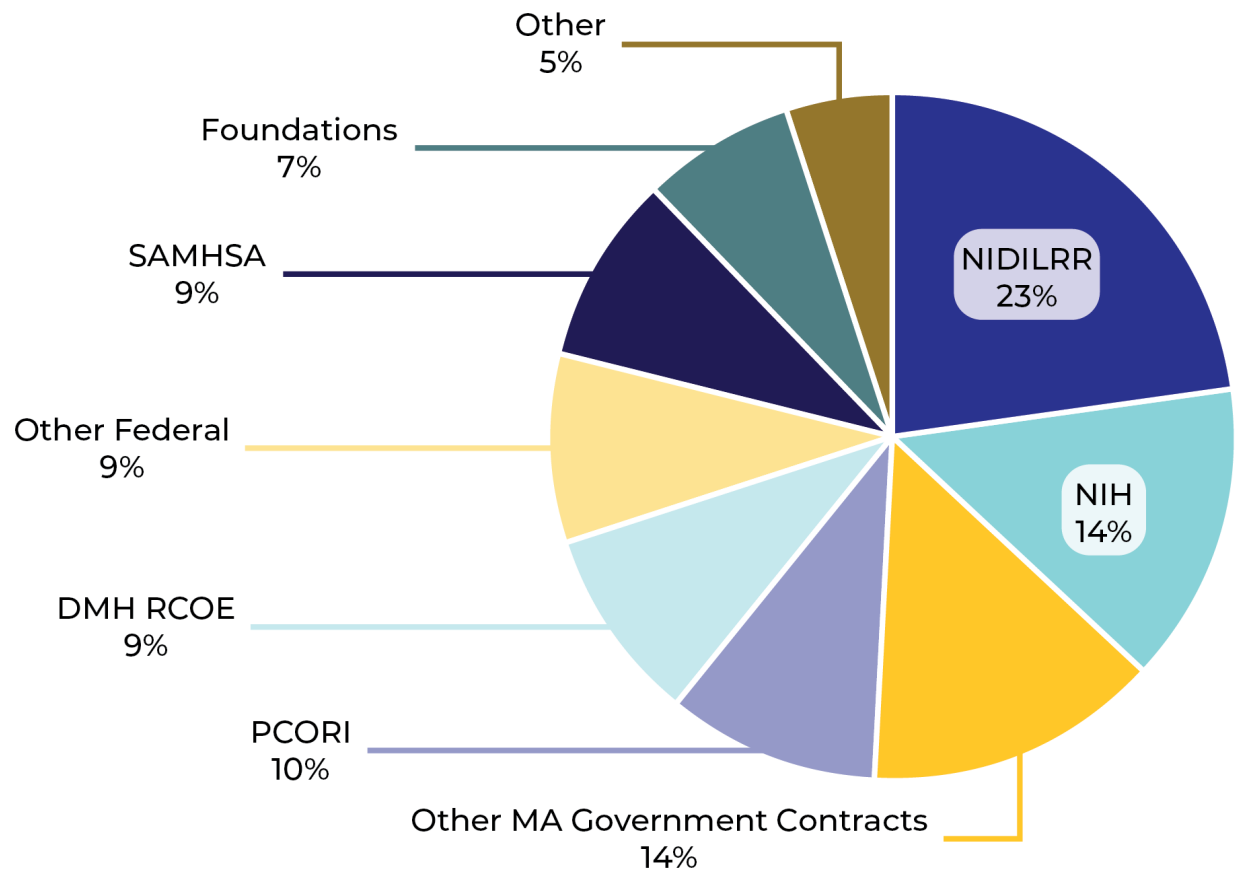


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2023 Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference

On May 1, 2023, iSPARC and the MGH Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research co-hosted the 2023 Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence.

The theme of this virtual conference was, “[Stories of Hope: Real World Change Through Mental Health Research](#).” Over 120 individuals attended the conference, which had a primary goal of exploring the unique but intersecting mental health experiences of youth, young adults, and their families.

DMH Commissioner, Brooke Doyle, provided opening remarks about the new Community Behavioral Health Centers being established across the Commonwealth. Additional presentations were given by COE Directors Maryann Davis and Cori Cather, as well as faculty members from both Centers — Kathryn Sabella, Katherine Koh, and Colin Burke. Presentations focused on highlights of iSPARC’s 30 years as a DMH-funded Research Center of Excellence; recent growth in the MGH Department of Psychiatry; bryt, an innovative model to support students who have experienced a mental health-related school disruption; and interventions to address homelessness across the lifespan.

Last but not least, Maya Ingram of iSPARC led a highly praised panel discussion of persons with lived experience of a mental health condition that focused on “Lived Experience Experts: The Value of Qualified Research Advisors.”

“I thought this panel was fantastic, a diverse group of passionate voices for this cause. I was interested to learn about the projects and products that each panelist has been involved in that they are proud of. Something that stuck with me was something [one panelist] said: ‘I am the only being that has lived in this body...Our lived experience is our gold.’”

Visit our [conference webpage](#) to access the detailed conference agenda, copies of presentation slides, and presentation recordings.

**The 2023 Annual
Massachusetts Department of Mental Health
Research Centers of Excellence
Virtual Conference**

**Stories of Hope:
Real World Change through Mental Health Research**

**Monday
May 1, 2023** **12:30 –
4:30 PM EDT** **Zoom
Webinar**

Featured Speakers

Kathryn Sabella
Assistant Professor,
iSPARC, UMass Chan
Medical School

Katherine Koh
Psychiatrist, MGH;
Assistant Professor,
Harvard Medical School

Colin Burke
Medical Director, MGH
ARMS; Instructor, Harvard
Medical School

Maya Ingram
Research Project Director,
iSPARC, UMass Chan
Medical School

**With opening remarks by Brooke Doyle, Commissioner
of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health**

Register
[https://umassmed.zoom.us/webinar/register/
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See the full agenda on our website:
[https://www.umassmed.edu/isparc/
about-our-center/DMH_Conference/](https://www.umassmed.edu/isparc/about-our-center/DMH_Conference/)

Mass DMH **iSPARC** **UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL** **MGH** **Center of Excellence
for Psychosocial and Systemic Research**

ASL interpreter services and CEUs for Psychology, RN, Social Work, OT, and LMHC are available.

Public Mental Health and Implementation Research Program

All research conducted by iSPARC faculty falls under the Public Mental Health and Implementation Research Program. The program is co-directed by Maryann Davis, Director of iSPARC, and Stephenie Lemon, Chief of the Division of Preventive Medicine within the UMass Chan Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences (PQHS).

In FY23, the major goal of this program was to continue to nurture research collaborations between iSPARC faculty. Activities to foster collaboration included presentations and discussions of each other's work through the iSPARC Interactive Learning (iSPARC-IL) series, as well as regular research highlights presented during monthly faculty meetings. Grant opportunities for pursuing these collaborations were identified by the Grant Support Team and circulated to faculty. The majority of submitted grants were reviewed by the Grant Support Team, which included several PQHS faculty members, again providing opportunities for greater collaboration between iSPARC and members of other UMass Chan Departments (see [page 53](#) for additional information about the iSPARC Grant Support Team). This enhanced environment resulted in the submission of **21** grants and contracts across FY23 in which iSPARC faculty were Principal Investigators (PI), site PIs, or Co-Investigators, an impressive increase from the 15 grants and contracts submitted in FY22.

Six new faculty members joined iSPARC this year — Ayorkor Gaba, Megan Kelly, Taber Lightbourne, Radley “Chris” Sheldrick, Brian Stevenson, and Martha Zimmermann. Spencer Lawson joined iSPARC in a newly created role as a Senior Research Scientist in the Law & Psychiatry Program. Additionally, we successfully recruited two new postdoctoral fellows into a pipeline specifically designed to train and retain promising early-stage investigators in the field of public mental health research. Nana Yaa A. Marfo joined iSPARC in August 2022 as the Clinical Investigation Postdoctoral Fellow and Hannah Seward joined iSPARC in September 2022 as the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Research Postdoctoral Fellow. Upon their

arrival, each new iSPARC member presented their research programs and an introduction to their field of research to create opportunities for collaboration with existing iSPARC faculty.

Another primary goal of the Public Mental Health and Implementation Research Program is to support the conduct of funded research. To this end, we have strengthened our collaboration with the Quantitative Methods Core of UMass Chan. Bruce Barton, who directs the Core, presented the various capacities of the CORE to iSPARC faculty, and together we developed a streamlined approach to obtaining high-level statistical and methods input for every grant proposal. We also developed a plan to improve the capacity of the Grant Support Team. With the addition of new iSPARC faculty, scientists, and postdoctoral fellows, we needed to increase the capacity of the Grant Support Team. The planned improvements, developed by iSPARC faculty as a group, will provide a larger group of guaranteed reviewers whose time is supported for this activity, and will be enacted in FY24.

iSPARC research has continued and thrived during this past year, the success of which is clear from the many publications and products reflecting this work. FY24 will focus on helping new iSPARC investigators successfully launch their research programs and will continue to seek new opportunities for collaborations that strengthen the scope of iSPARC research.



iSPARC Faculty Promotions and Appointments

- In February 2023, **Gina Vincent** was promoted to Professor of Psychiatry with a secondary appointment in Pediatrics.
- In June 2023, both **Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins** were awarded secondary appointments in the Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine.
- **Michelle Mullen** is under review for an appointment as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.

New iSPARC Investigators

In FY23, iSPARC welcomed 7 new investigators to the Center:



Taber Lightbourne, MD, joined iSPARC in August 2022 as part of the Lifeline for Moms Program. She joins us from the University of Pennsylvania, where she was a community psychiatry fellow. Prior to that, she completed her residency in adult psychiatry and a fellowship in women's mental health at Columbia University Medical Center. During her fellowship, she conducted research on maternal mortality review committees. She is committed to promoting health equity and increasing access to evidence-based mental health treatment, especially for underserved and marginalized communities. Here at UMass Chan and Lifeline for Families, she is conducting research and program development aimed at increasing access to perinatal mental health care. Additionally, she will work part-time at Community Health Link providing clinical services.



Megan Kelly, PhD, joined iSPARC in September 2022. She is Professor of Psychiatry at UMass Chan, has been a faculty member in the UMass Chan Department of Psychiatry since 2009, and has a history of collaboration with iSPARC investigators Maryann Davis and Raj Sadasivam on research focused on smoking cessation among individuals with mental health conditions. She has a long history of collaboration with Marsha Ellison on community reintegration research. Megan is the Co-Director and Bedford Site Director of the VISN 1 New England Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC). She obtained her PhD in clinical psychology at the University at Albany, State University of New York in 2005 and she completed her research fellowship at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University in 2007. Her current research involves VA- and NIH-funded studies of novel psychosocial and digital interventions for people with co-occurring tobacco use, mental health disorders, and health disparities and interventions to improve the social reintegration of veterans with PTSD. She is also involved in organizational change efforts for addressing tobacco use in the Veterans Health Administration. She founded the Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness Research and Treatment at the VA Bedford Healthcare System and UMass Chan. **On July 1, 2023, Maryann Davis will be stepping down as iSPARC Center Director and Megan will be our new Center Director.**



Ayorkor Gaba, PhD, joined iSPARC in October 2022. She is Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Equity Division at the Massachusetts Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts. Her research aims to inform programs, practices, and policies to eradicate behavioral health and health care disparities, foster structural change, and enhance community engagement in research and implementation practice. She is a researcher and clinician whose current work is at the intersection of health equity, behavioral health, and the criminal legal system.




Spencer Lawson, PhD, joined iSPARC in October 2022. He recently received his PhD in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University. He comes to iSPARC with extensive experience working on several research initiatives focused on criminal justice populations, including topics related to occupational stress among law enforcement, re-entry and drug courts, and validation of pretrial jail risk tools. In his new role as Senior Research Scientist, he is working with Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program on a MacArthur Foundation project to examine use of risk tools in making decisions about jail/detention for juvenile and adult justice populations. There is a specific focus on whether these tools lead to a reduction in racial and behavioral health disparities in jail decisions. He will also be engaged in multiple other projects related to racial disparities in justice settings and will be gaining considerable training on behavioral health, forensic, and implementation-related research.



Martha Zimmermann, PhD, our Lifeline for Moms postdoctoral fellow, joined the faculty of UMass Chan in November 2022 as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry when she was awarded a University of Massachusetts Center for Clinical and Translational Science (UMCCTS) Mentored Career Development (KL2) Award. Her project, **Developing a Scalable Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety in Obstetric Settings**, focuses on developing and iteratively refining the Prevent Perinatal Anxiety intervention, a multicomponent digital health intervention to prevent perinatal anxiety disorders. Community engagement, user-centered design, and implementation approaches will be used to adapt an Anxiety Sensitivity Intervention for digital health and for integration into obstetric settings to maximize intervention reach.



Chris Sheldrick, PhD, joined iSPARC as Professor of Psychiatry in March 2023 from the School of Public Health at Boston University. He is also part of the Lifeline for Moms Program and Lifeline for Families Center. Prior to joining iSPARC he had been collaborating with the Lifeline for Moms team for the past three years on their CDC-funded **Roadmap for Evaluating Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs** study and the **National Network of Access Programs**. His research focuses on the science and practice of screening and clinical decision making, spanning from instrument development to implementation and evaluation of screening protocols. Collaborating with Dr. Ellen Perrin, he helped to create the [Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children](#) , a freely-available comprehensive screening instrument for young children. Together, they are now completing a study comparing the accuracy of several developmental and behavioral screening instruments that are prominently used in pediatrics. In addition, he has received training in systems science and decision analysis through a KM1 fellowship. His current research applies these methods with the goal of helping clinicians improve, identify, and help children with developmental and behavioral problems in a range of community settings.



Brian Stevenson, PhD, joined iSPARC in May 2023 as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry. He is a licensed psychologist and researcher for the VISN 1 Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) at the VA Bedford Healthcare System. He serves as a faculty member for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Fellowship. He is Co-Director of the Program for Outpatient, Wellness, Engagement, & Recovery (POWER), a clinic providing outpatient services to veterans living with serious mental illness, and serves as the Director of the Work & Recovery Lab. Dr. Stevenson's clinical and research endeavors focus on improving vocational outcomes of individuals living with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, as well as the provision of recovery-oriented psychotherapy services. He recently received a 5-year VA Rehabilitation Research & Development (RR&D) Career Development Award-2 (CDA-2) to develop and test a novel vocational counseling intervention to augment transitional work services. Dr. Stevenson serves as a member of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Task Force on Serious Mental Illness and Severe Emotional Disturbance (TFSMI/SED) where he is involved in advocacy and policy work to enhance recovery services for individuals living with serious mental illness.

Incoming iSPARC Investigators

In FY24, iSPARC is thrilled to welcome two new additional faculty members:



Lourah Kelly, PhD, will be joining iSPARC as an Investigator in the Department of Psychiatry in July 2023 and is under review for an appointment as Assistant Professor. She completed her B.A. in Psychology at George Mason University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Suffolk University. She joins us from UConn School of Medicine, where she completed a T32 Postdoctoral Fellowship in alcohol treatment research. Her work broadly focuses on co-occurring substance use problems and suicide risk in transition aged youth, and technology-based interventions specifically designed for this population. She is Principal Investigator of a K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism entitled **Development and Evaluation of an Avatar Guided Mobile Health Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Misuse and Suicidality**. The K99 phase of this project included intensive mentorship, training, and a research project in which she engaged multiple key partners (clinical experts, emergency department expertise, young adults with lived expertise) in developing an avatar-guided mobile health intervention for young adults with alcohol use problems and suicidal thoughts who present to the emergency department. She will now conduct her R00 research at iSPARC, testing the usability and feasibility of this intervention. She is also Co-Investigator on two projects funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (R37DA052918; PI Becker and R24DA057632; PI Zajac).



Shaobing Su, PhD, will be joining iSPARC in December 2023 as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry. Dr. Su's doctoral and postdoctoral training compassed developmental theories, advanced research methods (e.g., longitudinal sequential design, intervention and implementation research), and advanced statistical techniques. As the director of the Immigration and Child Development (FSCD) Lab, Dr. Su leads research on mental health and positive youth development (PYD) for vulnerable and underserved children, with a particular focus on those affected by parent-child separation due to migration or immigration. She employs community-based participatory research (CBPR) and mixed-methods approaches to identify factors and processes impacting mental health and PYD across various ecological levels, especially factors within the microsystem. She is the PI on an NIH **Pathway to Independence Awards** (K99/R00) (2022–2027). Having successfully completed her K99 research and training at Boston College, she will now conduct her R00 research at iSPARC using quantitative and mixed-methods approaches to understand mental health disparities and related multi-level risk and protective factors throughout the periods of separation and reunification among separated-reunited Chinese American children.

Spotlights on New Research Projects

Serious Mental Illness



Marsha Ellison is co-investigator for a newly awarded grant to Jay Gorman, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Boston University School of Medicine, for **VOICES Socials for Older Veterans with Depression**. This work is funded by the Veterans Health Administration, Office of Research and Development Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D). The Veteran Outreach Into the Community to Expand Social Support (VOICES) is an intervention developed by Department Veteran Affairs staff to improve social connection and provide information about services by implementing community-based Veterans Socials. This two-year project will assess the feasibility and acceptability of delivering a community-based social support group (VOICES) to older veterans who are experiencing depression.



Xiaoduo Fan is principal investigator of the **Device-assisted Exercise Interventions and Lifestyle Changes in Individuals with Serious Mental Illness** project funded by the Remillard Family Community Service Fund. This project will expand upon a pre-existing walking group led by the Genesis Club, which aims to encourage individuals with serious mental illness to become more active. Each participant will receive a mobile health technology device (e.g., Fitbit). Additionally, over the course of eight weeks, participants will be offered a 45-minute outdoor walking group three times a week, as well as a weekly group education and support meeting.

Law and Psychiatry



Dara Drawbridge was awarded the **2023 Competitive Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative Local Action Research Partners** by the MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. During this one-year project, Dara and her team will provide strategic, analytic, and research support to the City of Fitchburg in their efforts to reduce gang violence. The team will also assess barriers and facilitators to implementation of Shannon-funded programs and develop an implementation blueprint for Shannon programs in the Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster areas.

Perinatal Mental Health



Nancy Byatt and Elizabeth Peacock-Chambers, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at UMass Chan — Baystate, were awarded funds from Apricus Principle to conduct **Whole Family Wellness: Supporting Parents Across Systems of Care**. The primary goal of this four-year project is to adapt an evidence-based attachment-based parenting intervention, Mothering from the Inside Out (MIO), for delivery by community-based professionals.

- Nancy Byatt and Tiffany Moore Simas, Chair and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UMass Chan, were awarded Year 4 of **The Lifeline for Moms Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs** by the Perigee Fund. The primary goal of this project is to continue the multi-state National Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs which facilitates peer learning, program evaluation, and research among Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs.

- Nancy Byatt is co-investigator on PCORI subaward **Community-Based, Family-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach to Timely Detection and Management of Early Postpartum Hypertension** with principal investigators Rafael Perez-Escamilla and Heather Lipkind, Yale School of Public Health. The goal of this project is to improve clinical outcomes, including mental health outcomes, among postpartum at-risk women experiencing health disparities by increasing awareness, detection, and timely care of postpartum hypertension, mental health, and cardiovascular complications. The project aims to improve mean postpartum systolic blood pressure at six weeks and reduce depression severity at three months postpartum.

- Nancy Byatt and Jessica Griffin, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at UMass Chan, were awarded private foundation funding for **Lifeline for Parents**. The primary goal of this project is to build on their existing scalable models of perinatal mental health care and early childhood trauma interventions to develop a scalable peer support model for parents.



Martha Zimmermann was awarded a University of Massachusetts Center for Clinical and Translational Science (UMCCTS) Mentored Career Development (KL2) Award for her project **Developing a Scalable Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety in Obstetric Settings**. This project focuses on developing and iteratively refining the Prevent Perinatal Anxiety intervention, a multicomponent digital health intervention to prevent perinatal anxiety disorders. Community engagement, user-centered design, and implementation approaches will be used to adapt an Anxiety Sensitivity Intervention for digital health and for integration into obstetric settings to maximize intervention reach.



Kimberly Yonkers is the principal investigator of the **Development of a Text Intervention for Perinatal Depression** project funded by the NIMH. This study will develop and conduct a preliminary test a text messaging intervention that will reduce the risk of a major depressive episode and worsening depressive symptoms in perinatal individuals. The system will screen pregnant individuals, send tailored text messages with links to enhanced content, and will include a peer chat function. This accessible text platform will leverage both the ease of use inherent in text messages and the power of enhanced content drawn evidence from based behavioral interventions (Interpersonal Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).

Child & Family Mental Health



Chris Sheldrick is site principal investigator and director of the evaluation team of **Transforming and Expanding Access to Mental Health Care in Urban Pediatrics** (TEAM UP for children). Co-developed with community health centers with funding from the Smith Family Foundation & Klarman Foundation, the TEAM UP model offers an innovative approach to addressing pediatric behavioral health issues at the community level. The TEAM UP model utilizes a fully integrated, multidisciplinary care team of behavioral health clinicians, community health workers, and primary care providers focusing on promotion, prevention, early identification of emerging behavioral health issues, and swift access to behavioral health care. TEAM UP creates a Learning Community with in-depth, ongoing clinical training and practice transformation, technical assistance, and an evaluation arm to prove and improve the model. TEAM UP's vision is that all children in families will live within a community that fosters and promotes physical and behavioral health, wellness, and resilience.

Addiction Treatment Research



Rajani Sadasivam and Thomas Houston, Professor of General Internal Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, are co-principal investigators of the NIH-funded project, **Using Rural Community Paramedicine to Engage Lower-Motivated Smokers: Spreading an Effective mHealth-Assisted Intervention to Motivate Cessation**. In this five-year project, the investigators will conduct a “hybrid type 2” study (i.e., a study with both implementation and effectiveness outcomes) to test: 1) two implementation programs in rural counties and 2) two smoker interventions. At the county-level, the implementation trial uses a novel multi-strategy implementation program centered around rural community paramedicine. At the individual level, this trial will target individuals living in these harder-to-reach rural areas. Engaging these smokers is possible using a brief abstinence game challenge and mHealth tools.



In May 2022, **Ayorkor Gaba** was announced as a Scholar of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Program to Increase Diversity Among Individuals Engaged in Health-Related Research (PRIDE-CVD). In October 2022, she received an NHLBI PRIDE CVD Small Research Program grant to support the **Heart, Soul, & Recovery (HSR): Integrated Cardiovascular Risk Reduction, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care for African American/Black Men with Criminal Legal System Involvement** project. This project will utilize a community-engaged approach to culturally tailor an existing efficacious co-occurring disorder intervention to dually address CVD risk factors and co-occurring disorders among Black men with criminal legal involvement.

Ayorkor Gaba and Angela Walter, Associate Professor, Public Health, Zuckerberg College of Health Sciences UMass Lowell, are co-principal investigators on the **Adapting a Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Multicomponent Intervention for Women** project, funded by a UMass Lowell Office of Research and Innovation 2023 Internal Seed Award. Through this project, the team will adapt a co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder multicomponent intervention for women. To inform the adaptation, the project incorporates qualitative interviews with women with co-occurring disorders and their providers to understand their co-occurring disorder care needs, as well as a Delphi panel of diverse experts.




Megan Kelly is co-investigator for **ACT on Vaping: Digital Therapeutic for Young Adult Vaping Cessation**, a NIDA-funded study led by Jaimee Heffner, Associate Professor, Cancer Prevention Program Public Health Sciences Division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute. The objectives of this study are to develop an ACT on Vaping smartphone app and evaluate its acceptability and preliminary impact on cessation-related targets. Following these initial steps, the team will then conduct a

fully powered randomized controlled trial to evaluate effectiveness of ACT on Vaping relative to the control program as well as evaluate theory-based mediators and moderators of ACT on Vaping treatment effects. This is an innovative study because: 1) it is the first ACT-based program of any kind for young adult vaping; 2) it is a digital cessation program using avatars, interactive games, and other multimedia experiences as engagement strategies is substantially different than existing treatments; 3) there are no evidence-based smartphone apps targeting young adult vaping, despite a strong preference for this modality; and, 4) there are no digital programs of any type with demonstrated efficacy for young adult e-cigarette users at varying levels of readiness to quit.

Transition Age Youth



Marsha Ellison and Colleen McKay were awarded **Promoting Access, Inclusion, and Success of Students with Emotional Disturbance in Career and Technical Education**, a three-year NIDILRR Field Initiated Project. This project includes the revision and pilot testing of [*Translating Evidence to Support Transitions in Career and Technical Education \(TEST-CTE\)*](#) , a guide for special educators on how to promote CTE for special education students with emotional disturbance. The goals of the project are to: 1) revise the existing TEST-CTE guide to assure a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens; and, 2) conduct a randomized pilot of TEST-CTE. The team will produce a revised TEST-CTE guide that assures cultural relevance for minority students and test study processes and outcomes. With these products, TEST-CTE will be positioned for a subsequent efficacy trial, one that holds promise for improved employment of youth with emotional disturbance.



Maryann Davis is co-investigator for a new NIDA-funded grant awarded to Kristyn Zajac, Associate Professor of Medicine at UConn Health — **Collaborative Hub for Emerging Adult Recovery Research (CHEARR)**. CHEARR is a partnership between advanced researchers, emerging adults in recovery, providers, and payors that will advance research on opioid recovery services for emerging adults (ages 16–25). Using a community-based participatory approach, the Initiative partners will: 1) develop critical tools to conduct high-quality research; 2) provide a hub of science on continuing care for emerging adults on multiple platforms to educate and engage the larger scientific community, communities impacted by opioid use disorder, and other key partner communities; and 3) create a trainee-to-investigator pipeline.



Kathryn Sabella is site-principal investigator and incoming iSPARC faculty member **Lourah Kelly, PhD**, is principal investigator of **Development and Evaluation of an Avatar Guided Mobile Health Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Misuse and Suicidality**, funded by the NIAAA. Emerging adults have higher rates of binge drinking, thoughts of suicide, and suicide attempts than any other age group, but very low use of substance use treatment. This project seeks to develop a mobile health intervention guided by an avatar for emerging adults who visit the emergency department and who binge drink and experience thoughts of suicide. Because emerging adults prefer mobile health and self-guided interventions and such technology is widely accessible, the proposed mobile health intervention could offer significant public health benefit in reducing alcohol use disorders and suicidal thoughts in emerging adults.

Technical Assistance/ Consultation and External Funding Program

The iSPARC Technical Assistance/Consultation and External Funding Program is co-led by Gina Vincent and Marsha Ellison and, during the first half of FY23, was managed by Sharon Leahy-Lind. The program also benefits from coordination by program implementation specialists Maryann Preskul-Ricca and Alexis Kirkland, expert consultation from Marianne Farkas from the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University, and evaluation assistance from Morgan Rao. The program is responsible for providing basic technical assistance services and intensive implementation support to MA DMH and its contracted providers. This program also houses our Communications Division, led by Marsha Ellison and directed by Dee Logan, described in detail on pp. [34](#) – [37](#).

Basic Technical Assistance

Basic technical assistance (TA) consists of up to 16 hours of free iSPARC TA services per request. Basic TA can be requested by DMH leadership and the larger DMH workforce via the [iSPARC website](#) [↗](#). Across FY23, we received 21 new requests for basic TA, which totaled 110 hours of faculty and staff time to fulfill these requests. Requests came from individuals with lived experience or their family members, DMH-funded agencies, DMH staff, and other state agencies (e.g., The Massachusetts Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts).

Examples of requests received in FY23 pertained to:

- Information about implementation science
- Resources for grant proposals
- Development of a plan to conduct an environmental scan for early violence intervention programs for youth and young adults
- Providing project assistance via our Young Adult Advisory Board
- Providing information about mental health screening measures adapted for transition age youth

One especially notable highlight of our FY23 Basic TA was requested by Gordon Benson, Vice President for Adult Outpatient Services at Community Healthlink. Dr. Benson contacted iSPARC requesting a literature review on adaptations made for evidence-based practices that assure cultural relevance to communities of color. This assistance would aid CHL's proposed intention to deliver culturally relevant services within their CCBHC and CBHC. This TA request was fulfilled by Ayorkor Gaba, iSPARC faculty member and health disparities researcher. With the help of Morgan Rao, Ayorkor completed a gray and scientific literature review on this topic and developed a spreadsheet charting the findings. Ayorkor prepared for Community Healthlink a summary report of the literature review, including links to relevant resources. This report fulfilled the iSPARC TA commitment. Ayorkor also made recommendations for consultants who could implement the findings of the literature review within Community Healthlink.



Intensive Technical Assistance (Implementation Support)

The TA/Consultation Program has worked closely with DMH to improve contracted provider agencies' fidelity to its Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model. To that end, iSPARC is following the Active Implementation Frameworks model, which has four stages:

1. Exploration (needs assessment/data-gathering)
2. Installation (development of the strategies/materials/policies to be implemented)
3. Initial Implementation (piloting and refining the strategies in one region)
4. Full Implementation (statewide implementation)

The primary aims of FY23 were to: 1) revise and complete the products pilot-tested in FY22 to improve fidelity to the ACCS model; 2) fully implement these materials in

three regions across the Commonwealth; and 3) provide support to the peer specialists workgroup to complete and pilot test their new supervisor guidance.

1. Products Completed for Implementation to Improve Fidelity to ACCS

ACCS Best Practice Structured Interview Process for Clinicians

This implementation product is a structured hiring packet intended for ACCS clinicians and is geared towards hiring qualified individuals with a diversity and inclusion lens. The product includes fillable forms for a Telephone Screening, Part 1 Interview, Part 2 Interview and Summary Scoring. The [ACCS Best Practice Hiring Guide](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/accs-documents-and-information-for-providers) [↗](#) is publicly available on the DMH website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/accs-documents-and-information-for-providers> (scroll to bottom of page).

ACCS Foundational Training Curriculum Packet

This training curriculum contains ten training modules designed to cover foundational principles and ACCS practices for all personnel types, from direct care staff to clinicians. Each module includes a PowerPoint presentation with notes, a facilitator's guide with notes and instructions for activities and breakout sessions, handouts, and pre-post knowledge tests. The training topics, most of which are relevant to any practitioners working with persons served by the mental health system are:

- **Foundational Principles:** Integrated Team Approach, Person-Centered Care Approach, Recovery-Oriented Approach, Coordination with Systems of Care, Importance of Evidence-Based Practices, Trauma-Informed Care
- **How to Apply Principles to ACCS:** Risk Management, Motivational Interviewing, Suicide Prevention, Substance Use 101

The training module folders are publicly available and can be downloaded from the iSPARC [Technical Assistance and Consultation Program](#) [↗](#) page.

2. Full Implementation Activities


iSPARC began implementing both products described above in the Northeast and Metro areas in January 2023. The TA program team worked with DMH Directors of Community Services to organize a 13-member Regional Implementation Team of agency champions and key personnel (e.g., hiring managers, peer supporters). To assist with the statewide rollout, the iSPARC TA program also worked with ACCS agencies to develop a Statewide Implementation Team, which included six volunteers from various agencies from the Southeast who represent different types of personnel (e.g., hiring manager, trainer, peer specialist). The Statewide Implementation Team provides local expertise to advise new regions in their implementation efforts. Both groups met monthly, either separately or combined, until June 2023 when the materials had become fully implemented across the six

agencies. In addition, in February 2023, iSPARC met with the Southeast Area agencies (the original pilot region) to finalize their plans for full implementation of these final products.

iSPARC developed surveys to monitor monthly usage and fidelity to the clinician interview process and foundational training materials in the Southeast, Northeast, and Metro agencies from March through June 2023. By the end of June, the data indicated that agencies had used the Structured Interview Process for Clinicians 29 times and successfully hired 14 candidates into clinical positions. Six out of a total 10 agencies did not use the interview process during this time, primarily due to a lack of applicants or clinical positions to fill. The agencies also conducted 10 training sessions using materials from the Foundational Training Curriculum, which spanned training for 107 staff, some new hires and some existing ACCS workers. Six agencies (not the same as above) had not used the training curriculum by June.

In May 2023, iSPARC started working with Directors of Community Services to organize a Regional Implementation Team for implementation across the final two regions—Central and Western. By the end of June 2023, all eight agencies had selected their representatives for this team, which will start to convene in FY24. Once the materials are rolled out to this final set of regions and all monthly utilization data are gathered, iSPARC will provide DMH with a summary of how often the products were used, when the products were not used, and practitioners' fidelity to their use.

3. Intensive TA for Peer Support Supervision

During FY23, iSPARC assisted with the release of a [final report](#)  on recommendations for peer support supervision, which was prepared and completed by the ACCS Peer Support Supervision Workgroup in September 2022. Following this, iSPARC collaborated with the workgroup and two of its leaders, Justin Brown and Adam Whitney, to commence its implementation. A decision was made to initially focus on one of the four report recommendations, the "Supervision Guidelines," and to implement it in the Northeast region in tandem with the NE Regional Implementation Team. A sub-committee of the Regional Implementation Team was developed, comprised of peer support champions from each of the six Northeast ACCS agencies. An agency-specific process of rolling out the guidelines was initiated and reported on during meetings of the sub-committee. In addition, two surveys were developed and completed by agencies on (1) agency perception of the feasibility of implementing the guidelines and (2) implementation strategies based on case scenarios. At the end of FY23, we initiated the process of rolling out the Guidelines to the Central and Western DMH regions.

External Funding

During this fiscal year, a two-year scope of work was completed with the UMass Chan's *forHealth* division (formerly Commonwealth Medicine). *forHealth* has a contract with MA Office of Medicaid to open and run a platform for training clinicians employed

under the Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) contracts. The resulting Behavioral Health Workforce Training Clearinghouse has a website, electronic learning platform, numerous self-paced, asynchronous learning modules, and numerous recorded webinars. The purpose of the scope of work was for iSPARC to promote and sustain implementation of evidenced-based practices required of the CBHCs and provide technical assistance through learning communities on needed implementation topics. During FY23, using an implementation science framework, iSPARC assessed CBHC readiness to implement evidence-based practices, assessed their technical assistance needs through online surveys, and provided resulting reports. Marsha Ellison also delivered a webinar on implementation drivers that is available on the Clearinghouse website.

As a result of our external funding program, in April 2023, Gina Vincent and the Law and Psychiatry consultation team (Jessica Rao, Implementation Specialist consultant; Rachael Perrault, Project Director; and Morgan Rao and Kayla Carew, Research Coordinators) initiated an environmental scan project for Kelly English, Deputy Commissioner of DMH's Child, Youth and Family Services and Omar Irizarry, DMH Director of Cross Agency Initiatives. Additional details of this project can be found in the Collaborations section ([page 51](#)).




iSPARC Communications Activities









The iSPARC Communications Team has developed state-of-the-art information dissemination strategies to ensure that our work is shared as widely, quickly, and effectively as possible. These efforts include live and virtual presentations, development of a variety of dissemination products, as well as web-based and social media campaigns. The primary goal of this dissemination is to speed the implementation of evidenced-based practices and the translation of research findings into actual practice in the community.

Top 5 FY23 Highlights from Communications Activities

1. Publishing three highly successful written products!

- [My “Must Have” Papers](#)  — 2,303 downloads
- [3 Tips to Improve Communication with Your Youth & Young Adults](#)  — 1,931 downloads
- [Emotional Support Animals: The Basics](#)  — 1,409 downloads

2. Creating several new webpages to highlight our work!

- [May is Mental Health Month: Lived Experience or Lived Expertise?](#) 
- [May 18 is Mental Health Action Day](#) 
- [iSPARC Symposium at UMass Chan Psychiatry Research Day](#) 
- [Lost in Transition: The Journey from Pediatric to Adult Care for Youth with Mental Health Conditions](#) 
- [International Conference on Youth Mental Health — Sept 29 – Oct 1](#) 
- [Providing Culturally Competent Mental Health Care to LGBTQIA+ Youth & Young Adults](#) 

3. Providing high impact presentations and trainings! Such as:

- On August 3, 2022, **Nancy Byatt** presented the symposium *Changing Health Systems to Promote Perinatal Mental Health Equity* to 1,500 attendees at the 25th NIMH Conference on Mental Health Services Research.
- Between September 29, 2022 and October 1, 2022, **Maryann Davis, Maya Ingram, Ian Lane, Debbie Nicolellis, and Kathryn Sabella** presented at the 6th Annual International Association for Youth Mental Health Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- In March 2023, **Melissa Anderson** and **Ayorkor Gaba** each gave presentations during the American Psychological Association NGO67 Forum Parallel Event for the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.
- On April 27, 2023, iSPARC was invited to present an **iSPARC Symposium** during UMass Chan’s Department of Psychiatry Research Day. Maryann Davis provided an overview of iSPARC and presentations were given by Gina Vincent, Dara

Drawbridge, Spencer Lawson, Melissa Anderson, Alex Wilkins, Nana Yaa Marfo, Kathryn Sabella, Megan Kelly, and Brian Stevenson.

- On June 22, 2023, **Marsha Ellison** gave two presentations at the US SAMHSA Policy Academy on Supported Employment for Transition Age Youth in Rockville, MD.
- In June 2023, **Gina Vincent** gave the keynote address at the North American Corrections and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference in Toronto, Canada.

4. Co-hosting the DMH Research Centers of Excellence Conference!

- On May 1, 2023, iSPARC and the MGH Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research hosted the Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence. The theme of this virtual conference was [Stories of Hope: Real World Change Through Mental Health Research](#) [↗](#). Over 120 individuals attended the conference, including DMH staff, individuals with lived experience, family members, providers, and clinicians. (See [page 18](#) for conference additional details). During the conference, Maryann Davis gave an overview of the past 30 years of accomplishments of iSPARC.

5. Launching a new podcast!

- In FY23, iSPARC launched the new [S.T.A.Y. Tuned: Supporting Transition-Age Youth Podcast](#) [↗](#) by the Learning & Working RRTC at the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research. The podcast is for young adults with mental health conditions, made by young adults with mental health conditions. It's designed with the purpose of sharing useful information that our research team has learned about navigating school or work through studies with transition-age youth/young adults. We bring on guests, including our research collaborators from across the globe, and discuss the challenges and opportunities for youth with serious mental health struggles, particularly as they navigate educational and workforce experiences. Nine episodes were produced in FY23 with more to come in FY24.



FY23 By the Numbers



iSPARC faculty and staff gave **150** presentations to a total of approximately **10,600** audience members. **64** of these presentations took place in Massachusetts and reached **2,593** Massachusetts constituents.



iSPARC published **7** issue briefs and tip sheets (see Appendix B).



6,927 individuals are subscribed to iSPARC email lists.



iSPARC websites received two times the viewer traffic compared to FY22! We had **83,786** visits (FY22 = 40,824 visits) from **69,177** unique users (FY22 = 31,218 users) with **116,336** page views (FY22 = 62,290 views).



More than **40,000** dissemination products were downloaded from iSPARC websites and e-journals.



Our videos on YouTube have had **6,128** views (FY22 = 5,886).



There were **1,644** views of our American Sign Language translation videos on our iSPARC YouTube Channel (FY22 = 1,653).



iSPARC had **2,334** Facebook followers across our different accounts (FY22 = 2,124).



Our Twitter pages had **2,017** followers (FY22 = 1,967).



Our LinkedIn page had **544** followers, an increase of over 300 followers from FY22 (FY22 = 226).



The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's Instagram account had **305** followers (FY22 = 274).

Stakeholder Engagement Program

The Stakeholder Engagement Program is co-led by Melissa Anderson and Celine Larkin and supported by Emily Sudbrock. Partnership with persons with lived mental health experience, their family members, and the providers who serve them is critical to all phases of iSPARC research, training, and dissemination. A major part of this engagement is achieved through the guidance of iSPARC advisory boards — the weSPARC Insight Advisory Board, the Family Advisory Board, the Young Adult Advisory Board, and the Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council.

iSPARC Advisory Boards



weSPARC Insight

The weSPARC Insight Advisory Board is comprised of up to ten adults across the lifespan with lived mental health experience. The board is co-facilitated by Celine Larkin and Melissa Anderson. weSPARC Insight celebrated their one-year anniversary in January 2023. The members: (1) review and provide feedback on iSPARC research proposals, projects, and ideas in progress that would benefit from the perspective of persons with lived experience; and (2) review and provide feedback on iSPARC dissemination products, especially to enhance their usability by persons with lived experience as well as DMH and DMH-contracted providers. The board met 12 times in FY23 and focused on continuing to cohere as a team, having iSPARC researchers present their work to the board (e.g., Esther Boama-Nyarko, Nancy Byatt's mentee and a PhD student; Melissa Anderson; Celine Larkin; and Gina Vincent), dissemination of board materials, recruitment of new members and creating content for May

is Mental Health Month. weSPARC Insight created the campaign, [May is Mental Health Month: Lived Experience or Lived Expertise?](#) [↗](#) that is posted on iSPARC's website. The materials they created included videos, artwork, poetry, photographs, and resources.

Family Advisory Board

The Family Advisory Board (FAB) is facilitated by Jean Wnuk. The board met 9 times in FY23 and has 8 members who identify as family members of young adults with lived mental health experience. The board meets monthly to advise and provide a family perspective on research and communications activities within the Center. In November 2022, the FAB published the tip sheet [3 Tips to Improve Communication with Your Youth & Young Adults](#) [↗](#) that was a collaboration with the Young Adult Advisory Board. They also refreshed the content of two older tip sheets, [Applying for a Job: A Young Adult's Guide, Revised 2023](#) [↗](#) and [My 'Must' Have Papers](#) [↗](#). Maryann Davis visited the FAB twice. The first time to present the Learning & Working RRTC's Peer Academic Supports for Success (PASS) to obtain feedback on the best ways to share the findings from these

trials with key audiences including family members. Maryann later presented on the Learning & Working RRTC's Triangle Study and solicited feedback on how to disseminate the results for the greatest impact on families. Marsha Ellison and Hannah Seward, the L&W RRTC Post-doc, attended a FAB meeting to discuss the upcoming NIDILRR RRTC application on community participation to obtain the family perspective on what is important for young adults with serious mental health conditions in terms of community engagement and what have been the challenges the young adults in member's lived have faced. The Stakeholder Engagement Program co-leads, Melissa Anderson and Celine Larkin, visited the FAB to discuss Stakeholder Engagement at iSPARC and how iSPARC's advisory boards could work together to create a more positive impact at our Centers.



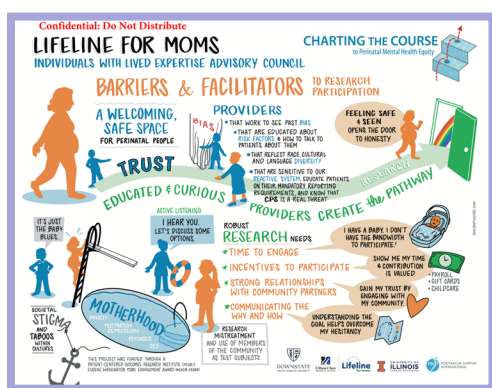
Young Adult Advisory Board

The Young Adult Advisory Board (YAB) is co-facilitated by Maya Ingram and Tracy Neville and is comprised of nine diverse young adults from around the United States, all of whom identify as having experience of serious mental health conditions. In FY23, the YAB met 12 times to provide feedback on grant-funded research

projects, including Focused Skill & Strategy Training to Support Employment of Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions (FSST at Work), Lourah Kelly's K99/R00, Learning & Working RRTC knowledge translation projects, RRTC training projects, and the DMH HYPE Course. They also collaborated with the FAB on dissemination products,

provided technical assistance, and collaborated closely with investigators in the writing of research proposals (e.g., NIDILRR Community Participation RRTC). Board Members offered feedback on everything from survey methodology proposals, study design, types of questions asked of young people, recruitment materials, to identifying important themes and aiding in our exploration of the implications of our findings. YAB Members produced 32 new, young adult-friendly memes which are culturally sensitive but also fun and relevant to youth voice. Board Members have played an important part in helping to develop comics, the [3 Tips to Improve Communication with Your Youth & Young Adults](#) tip sheet with the FAB, and providing feedback on the [Applying for a Job: A Young Adult's Guide, Revised 2023](#) and [My 'Must' Have Papers](#) tip sheets.

Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council



The Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council is co-facilitated by Tom Mackie, Chair of Health Policy and Management and Associate Professor at Downstate Health Sciences University, and Karen Tabb Dina, Associate Professor Social Work/ Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The Council is comprised of 17 diverse individuals with lived experience of a mental health condition during the perinatal period. In FY23, the Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council met 7 times to provide feedback on grant-

funded research projects (e.g., CDC Roadmap study and Reaching Calm) and provided valuable information for three PCORI research proposals. Members reviewed and provided feedback Module 5: Understanding and Sharing Research Findings of the PCORI Research Fundamentals training package. This free comprehensive training package offers different ways to learn about the health research process and be involved in patient-centered outcomes research. In FY23 the Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council focused on participating in a journey mapping activity which provides them the opportunity to have their physical and emotional experiences visually represented allowing for greater insight into the experiences and perspective of perinatal individuals and their providers. The journey mapping activities will be used to facilitate insight into identification of research questions for future patient-centered and comparative effectiveness scientific proposals.

Kay Matthews, Founder & Executive Director of Shades of Blue, worked with the council to host two conversations with members to reflect on the work they have done as a Council and to consider what conditions and resources are needed to continue working together and with academic partnerships to advance perinatal mental health equity. They discussed the purpose of this Council, guiding values, shared goals, needs and expectations, and rules and activities to begin shaping a governance framework for future engagements. In FY24, Kay Matthews will provide a report consolidating these discussions that the Charting the Course team will review and discuss with council members.

Programmatic Activities

In addition to supporting the activities of the advisory boards, described above, the Stakeholder Engagement Program delivers data-driven consultation and training to research teams across the Center to help support engagement of those with lived experience.

Planning and Assessment Tool (PAR-PAT)

Each year, all funded research projects at iSPARC are requested to complete the Participatory Action Research Planning and Assessment Tool (PAR-PAT), which measures the extent to which the community of focus is involved in designing, executing, interpreting, and disseminating in each research study. We identified several areas where our center excelled at involving communities of focus:

- Developing recruitment procedures
- Identifying/developing data collection measures/materials
- Developing recruitment materials
- Engaging with community partners that will aid recruitment efforts
- Identifying non-academic sources of dissemination
- Supporting development of products
- Conducting community workshops/presentations
- Preparing conference presentations
- Presenting at conferences (i.e., presentation, posters)
- Conducting team evaluation/debrief of project

Based on the FY22 PAR-PAT results, the Stakeholder Engagement team identified that iSPARC investigators are particularly skilled at involving their community of focus in several areas. These included: developing recruitment procedures and data collection protocols/measures; developing recruitment materials and engaging community partners in recruitment; conducting participant recruitment and data collection; and participating in discussions and refinement of findings. The SEP will continue to provide coaching and consultation in several areas of growth, including grant development and interpretation of analyses.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at iSPARC

iSPARC faculty and staff seek to promote equity and inclusion in all research efforts and programmatic initiatives that they undertake. Our workforce is supported in these aspirations by critical guidance and consultation provided by the iSPARC Workforce Enrichment Program.

Major achievements of this program in FY23 include the fourth annual administration of the iSPARC Diversity and Engagement Survey, as well as the successful inauguration of the iSPARC postdoctoral fellowship pipeline.

Fourth Annual iSPARC Diversity and Engagement Survey

The data presented below were collected in September 2022 and reflect the responses of 35 iSPARC staff and faculty members.

Workforce Diversity

➤ FY23 Strengths:

- 34% of staff and faculty identified as LGBTQIA+.
- 26% of staff and faculty identified as an individual with a disability, as compared to only 4% of the Worcester County workforce.
- 63% of staff and faculty identified as an individual with lived mental health experience, as compared to 52% in FY22.
- 80% of staff and faculty identified as a family member of someone with lived mental health experience, as compared to 72% in FY22.

➤ FY23 Areas for Improvement:

- 89% of iSPARC staff and faculty identified as White, non-Hispanic. This finding is slightly elevated as compared to the surrounding Worcester County population (84% White, non-Hispanic). FY23 recruitment efforts have recently led to successful recruitment of several BIPOC faculty members; as such, we anticipate that FY24 survey results will reflect the steadily increasing diversity of our workforce.

Inclusion and Engagement

➤ FY23 Strengths:

- More than 95% of staff and faculty reported that “I feel that my work contributes to the mission of iSPARC.”
- 91% of staff reported that they feel “connected to the vision, mission, and values of iSPARC.”
- 74% of staff and faculty reported that iSPARC provided “opportunities for me to engage in service and community outreach.” This was a 32% increase from the previous survey year!
- 68% of staff reported that they “have opportunities to work successfully in settings with diverse colleagues” at iSPARC. This was a 16% increase from the previous survey year!

➤ FY23 Areas for Improvement:

- Only 33% of staff and faculty reported that they are “confident that [their] accomplishments are compensated similar to others who have achieved their goals.” Although this is an improvement upon the 25% finding for this item in FY22, there remains room for improvement in terms of equitable reward and recognition. In response to this continued finding, iSPARC Leadership has worked to clarify and make transparent the UMass Chan salary equity review process for both staff and faculty. Additionally, our Leadership Team has engaged in increased advocacy efforts to post higher-level staff positions, as well as to urge the Compensation Department to offer more livable starting salaries during negotiations with new employees.

Postdoctoral Fellowship Pipeline


To address iSPARC’s areas of improvement in terms of our Center’s diversity, equity, and inclusion, our Workforce Enrichment Program has sought recurrent consultation from Margarita Alegría, Chief of the Disparities Research Unit at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Professor in the Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Based on Dr. Alegría’s guidance, one major activity was undertaken in

FY22 — the development of a postdoctoral fellowship program specifically designed to serve as a pipeline to increase the diversity of future iSPARC faculty members.

iSPARC's Postdoctoral Fellowships in Mental Health Services research support two 2-year, full-time postdoctoral fellows. Supported in part by the FY23 and FY24 DMH COE contract, the Clinical Investigation track postdoctoral fellow receives training, mentorship, and clinical supervision in the provision of mental health services and conduct of clinical research within underserved populations. To specifically encourage diverse candidates to apply, we included this language in the fellowship job posting: :

“We strongly encourage candidates who increase the field’s depth in research that addresses the needs of underserved racial or ethnic groups. As an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer, the UMass Chan Medical School recognizes the power of a diverse community and encourages applications from individuals with varied experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds. Recent university-wide diversity initiatives are described here.”

The intentionality of this hiring process resulted in the successful recruitment of postdoctoral fellow Dr. Nana Yaa Marfo, who began her postdoctoral training program in August 2022.

Future FY24 efforts to strengthen the iSPARC postdoctoral fellowship pipeline will include providing concrete assistance to iSPARC investigators with NIH funding to apply for NIH diversity supplements (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-222.html> ). These supplements will be leveraged to recruit and retain postdoctoral fellows from diverse backgrounds, including those from groups that have been shown to be underrepresented in health-related research.

Collaborations with DMH and Other State Agencies

Partnerships are critical given the increasingly collaborative and multidisciplinary nature of mental health services research. One of the key collaborations of iSPARC is our provision of intensive and basic technical assistance to DMH and other state agencies (pp. 30 – 37). As such, many of our significant collaborations are described in that section.

In addition to technical assistance-related collaborations, iSPARC faculty and staff successfully collaborate with DMH and other state agencies to further the missions of these organizations and to better meet the needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Highlights of such collaborations are outlined below.

Developing the Capacity of Young Adult Access Center Staff to Provide Career Development Activities through the HYPE Course

Leveraging the LMS platform previously used to train facilitators of the HYPE Course in Massachusetts in FY22, the HYPE team created a sustainable model of service delivery in career decision-making and preparing for work and school. The HYPE team developed a professional development training program for young adult and supervisory staff at Young Adult Access Centers across the Commonwealth to develop competency in delivering the HYPE Course to young adults with mental health conditions. To accomplish this, the HYPE team developed a pilot of a revised HYPE Course Facilitator Training, which was tested in October–November 2022 with trainees from one Young Adult Access Center. Feedback from the pilot test was obtained and used to further refine the HYPE Course Facilitator Training. The next version of the course rolled out in January 2023 to five Young Adult Access Centers across MA, training staff in both the content of 3 HYPE Courses and the facilitation skills needed to teach them. During training HYPE staff worked with the supervisors of the Young Adult Access Centers to support the implementation of the HYPE Course at their centers. In June 2023, the team completed the HYPE Course Facilitator Training with all the participating Young Adult Access Centers.

HYPE System of Care Project: Creating Sustainability for Career Development through a Train the Trainer Model



The HYPE team created a sustainable model of service delivery for young adults with mental health conditions in career development through which previous graduates of the HYPE Course Facilitator Training were recruited to be Training Fellows in the Summer of 2022. In Fall 2022, two previous trainees were selected for the HYPE Course Coaching Training. Both Fellows are young adults and work or have worked with diverse clientele in resource-challenged areas. The goal of the training of trainers was to teach Facilitators of the HYPE Course how to be effective trainers of the HYPE Course Facilitator Training . The train-the-trainer training was developed and piloted in FY23 to create a sustainable training in career development programming throughout the state. The HYPE Course Coaching Training focuses on the skills that Coaches need to facilitate the learning of facilitation skills and course content with HYPE Course Facilitator Training participants. The Coaching Course for Training Fellows began in November 2022 and they completed their training at the end of June 2023. The HYPE Team plans to continue to work with the new Trainers in FY24 through the State contract to help Young Adult Access Centers deliver the HYPE Course to promote career development for young adults.

Young Adult Access Center Toolkit Project



The aim of this project was to create an implementation toolkit to aid agencies and staff involved in the creation and ongoing maintenance of Young Adult Access Centers. The intended audience includes agency level leadership and staff of Access Centers and is intended to support implementation of Access Centers within and beyond the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. To develop this toolkit, the iSPARC Toolkit Development Team worked closely with DMH stakeholders Sue Wing, Betsy Edes, and Heidi Holland and the Young Adult Access Centers. The team collaboratively revised the existing Young Adult Access Center principles and formed a group of “key informants” to serve on a Development Advisory Group comprised of long-time staff from existing Access Centers. The Development Advisory Group finalized the core principles of Access Centers and outlined the Toolkit. Beginning in February 2023, the team conducted virtual and on-site data collection at seven Young Adult Access Centers. In total, the team spoke to more than 30 young adults who have utilized Access Centers and about 20 staff members. The final draft of DMH Toolkit is in production.

Healthy Transitions Evaluation Project (HT2)

During FY23, the HT2 evaluation team met regularly with the two HT2 sites in Gloucester and Lowell to improve data collection and support changes requested from SAMHSA in terms of reporting. The HT team also met regularly with DMH leadership (Sue Wing and Betsy Edes) and agency leadership from Vinfen and Justice Resource Institute to provide

ongoing updates and share outcome and demographic data from both centers. The HT2 evaluation team collaborated with DMH and SAMHSA leadership to revise data collection procedures to reflect the changes to SAMHSA's National Outcome Measures (NOMs) data reporting processes. These changes were effective in December 2022 and the two SAMHSA funded HT Young Adult Access Centers sites were trained. The HT2 evaluation team worked closely with the Production Team at *forHealth Consulting*, DMH leadership, and SAMHSA Healthy Transitions: Access Center leadership to create a four-page brief that can be used to promote the Access Centers with the goal of obtaining new funding to sustain Centers beyond the current grant.

The Central Massachusetts Tobacco-Free Community Partnership




The FY23 focus of the Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership was addressing how structural racism affects and impacts the social determinants of health. One key factor identified was food insecurity and another was transportation. The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community provided four mini grants to agencies that address food insecurity in Worcester to support their work while sharing tobacco resources to address the intersectionality between food insecurity, transportation and tobacco usage. The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership partnered with four programs in the Worcester area to address food insecurities in their community. They also collaborated with the Worcester Zero Fare Coalition to advocate for free bus fares as an efficient and reliable source of transportation. The Central MA

Tobacco-Free Community Partnership collaborated with the Worcester Food Policy Council and actively participated in weekly meetings to discuss local and state policies around food insecurity. The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership developed a [resource sheet](#) with a list of resources around food insecurity and other social determinants of health that will be distributed to partner agencies and the people they serve that will be published in early FY24.

Deaf-Accessible “Question, Persuade, Refer” (QPR) Training



Melissa Anderson collaborated with DMH and filmmaker Bryan Horch to create a Deaf-accessible version of the "Question, Persuade, Refer" (QPR) suicide prevention training. Professional filmmaking took place in August and September 2021. The filmmaking team focused on creating an authentic final training product by hiring Deaf actors and film directors with lived experience of depression and suicide attempts. The final version of the training video was completed and presented to DMH in March 2022. In June 2023, Melissa Anderson and DMH hosted

a Deaf train-the-trainer event. Nine Deaf DMH case managers and ACCS staff members became certified to provide QPR training! Check out the Deaf-accessible QPR training film at <https://deafyes.org/our-training/> 

Massachusetts Center of Excellence (CoE) for Specialty Courts



The Massachusetts Center of Excellence (CoE) for Specialty Courts, an initiative of the Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court, improves lives and outcomes of people involved with the criminal-legal system through innovative, evidence-based, and

equitable interventions. The CoE team is **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Brian Daly** (Co-Principal Investigator), **Amy Thornton** (Admin Asst II), **Ayorkor Gaba** (Co-Investigator), **Meaghan Dupuis** (Co-Investigator), **Mike Kane** (Co-Investigator), **Jinnia Baiye** (RC II), **Emily Zitek** (Biostat), and **Joshua Rumbut** (Software Engineer). The CoE is organized within three Divisions of work.

- The Research, Evaluation, and Policy Division drives initiatives to advance scientific knowledge of innovative, best, and evidence-based interventions at the intersection of behavioral health and the criminal-legal system.
- The Equity Division drives initiatives at the intersection of behavioral health and the courts to advance equity and reduce disparities in access, engagement, retention, and outcomes by strengthening cultural humility and responsiveness, mitigating structural barriers, engaging community members, and supporting courts in making diversity, equity, and inclusion essential components of programs, policies, and practices.
- The Implementation and Translation Division drives the adoption, implementation, and sustainment of evidence-based, best, and innovative practices in Specialty Courts and related settings through activities that translate scientific knowledge for the field and build system capacity.

Risk-Need-Responsivity: Implementation Support (RNR-IS)



In partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, *Risk-Need-Responsivity: Implementation Support* supports the implementation of Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) across 18 Community Justice Support Centers. RNR principles guide criminal-legal systems in their efforts to reduce recidivism. Despite evidence of RNR's efficacy, multi-level barriers to the implementation of integrated case management exist, and systems are struggling to implement this practice. Informed by the Interactive Systems Framework for Dissemination and Implementation and the Evidence-Based System for Innovation Support, this project designs and delivers Integrated Case Management – Implementation Support (ICM –IS).

ICM-IS is a capacity building approach, delivered by an implementation support team, to enhance effective implementation of RNR-informed integrated case management. Initially, sites receive 12-months (Phase 1) of low intensity support. At the conclusion of Phase 1, if integrated case management implementation is high then support activities cease. If integrated case management implementation is low at the end of Phase 1, then support activities intensify and continue from 12–24 months (Phase 2). The project team is **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Michelle Crist** (Post-Doctoral Associate), **Sydney Little** (RC II), and **Gretchen Landry** (RC I).

Project Navigation, Outreach, Recovery, Treatment and Hope: Implementation Support

Project Navigation, Outreach, Recovery, Treatment, and Hope (NORTH) is a free, grant-funded service managed by the Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court and the Massachusetts Probation Service. The main components of Project NORTH include voluntary court-based recovery support navigation, transportation to court and court-mandated treatment, and rent for up to 90 days in a certified and participating sober home. In partnership with the Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court, Project NORTH: Implementation Support designs and deploys the data infrastructure for Project NORTH, provides training and resources to navigators, and supports Project NORTH in the development of quality assurance and improvement activities. The project team is **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Jinnia Baiye** (RC II), **Emily Zitek** (Biostat), **Joshua Rumbut** (Software Engineer), and **Elena Munzell** (Contractor).

Shannon Community Safety Initiative (CSI) FY23 Local Action Research Partner

In 2020, **Dara Drawbridge** and her team partnered with the City of Fitchburg in its Shannon Community Safety Initiative to provide research, evaluation, training and technical assistance on efforts to improve youth and young adult outcomes in the Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster communities. Our Shannon Community Safety Initiative work includes assistance with implementing and monitoring risk assessments, design of intervention maps and implementation blueprints, community risk assessments, needs and resource assessments, and the design of a Shannon Young Adult Advisory Board. The project team are **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator) and **Jinnia Baiye** (RC II).

Training for Recovery & Engagement in Addiction Treatment (T.R.E.A.T)

Dara Drawbridge is working with *forHealth* Consulting on the Training for Recovery & Engagement in Addiction Treatment (T.R.E.A.T) project. This project is funded by the MA Department of Public Health and MA Executive Office of the Trial Court and provides Risk-Need-Responsivity in recovery Courts: Building a Shared-Understanding to Foster Change.

Enhancing System Delivery of Risk-Need-Responsivity through the Voice of Lived Experience

In partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, *Enhancing Deliver of Risk-Need-Responsivity through the Voice of Lived Experience* assists in the planning, design, and deployment of a Community Advisory Board that will provide recommendations to the state's 18 Community Justice Support Centers. The Community Justice Support Centers deliver a comprehensive program that is informed by the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model. The Community Advisory Board will be comprised of people with lived experience in the criminal-legal system who will provide input on policies, services, and supports. **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator) and **Michelle Crist** (Post-Doctoral Associate) are the project team.

Reimagining Community Service

In 2022, Massachusetts eliminated the practice of probation fees for adults supervised by probation in the state. This monumental change initiative sparked an opportunity to reimagine the Massachusetts Community Service Program model. In partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, Reimagining Community Service assists in efforts to re-design Community Service through planning and design efforts that focus on delivering meaningful experiences to people involved with the criminal-legal system. **Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator) and **Michelle Crist** (Post-Doctoral Associate) are the project team.

Massachusetts Probation Service



Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program's research and technical assistance team are providing consultation and training to the Massachusetts Probation Service to 1) identify individuals at risk of violence in the future; and 2) generate appropriate mitigation plans to prevent violence from occurring (e.g., level of monitoring needed, treatment, confinement). Law & Psychiatry is also working with the probation service and to determine how and where to implement this approach to achieve the maximum benefit.

Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate

Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program's research and technical assistance team has been working with the MA Office of the Child Advocate and the Department of Youth Services to design and implement their screening and assessment activities for the youth Diversion Lab in Massachusetts. The Office of the Child Advocate and Department of Youth Services designed this diversion approach to avoid involvement with the juvenile justice system for youth charged with offenses who do not need high levels of intervention to prevent more delinquency. The team has assisted the Office of the Child Advocate and Department of Youth Services with the design of a behavioral health and risk for

reoffending screening protocol coupled with research supported case planning. The Law & Psychiatry team also provides training for diversion screeners at new provider agencies annually, as well as booster training and data tracking consultation.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Starting in April 2023, **Gina Vincent** and the Law & Psychiatry Program's research and technical assistance team initiated an environmental scan project for Kelly English, Deputy Commissioner of DMH's Child, Youth and Family Services and Omar Irizarry, DMH Director of Cross Agency Initiatives. The purpose of this scan is to 1) Identify effective, feasible, and sustainable early violence intervention and crisis services for youth and young adults (aged 12 to 25) that may be most appropriate for expansion or adoption in Massachusetts; and 2) to advise about effective implementation strategies. The team is conducting interviews with state agencies across the Commonwealth, convening these agencies to inventory the Commonwealth's needs and gaps in youth violence intervention practices, and reviewing the literature to identify practices with the best evidence.

Faculty Development Program

The iSPARC Faculty Development Program is co-led by **Stephenie Lemon**, **William McIlvane**, and **Kathryn Sabella**. The aims of this program are to support iSPARC faculty members' professional development goals, as well as increase their chances of successfully obtaining funding for their programs of research. The main activities of this program are described below and contributed to the FY23 promotions of four stellar iSPARC colleagues:

- In February 2023, **Gina Vincent** was promoted to Professor of Psychiatry with a secondary appointment in Pediatrics.
- In June 2023, both **Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins** were awarded secondary appointments in the Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine.
- **Michelle Mullen** is under review for an appointment as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.

Faculty Coaching

Each year, iSPARC faculty members are offered the opportunity to meet with seasoned faculty (e.g., Stephenie Lemon, William McIlvane, Maryann Davis) to obtain individualized guidance on their professional development path. Coaches review the faculty member's curriculum vitae and, during an in-person meeting, provide their insights on areas of relative strength and areas for targeted growth.

Group Training Opportunities

In late FY21, iSPARC faculty identified leadership skills as a priority area for professional development. As such, both faculty and senior staff members began participating in Dare to Lead training beginning in early FY22. Based on the research of Brené Brown, Dare to Lead is an empirically based courage-building program that asserts that the world needs braver leaders. In the absence of courageous leadership, we are plagued with problems such as: Inability to have Tough Conversations; Difficulties with Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity; Lack of Innovation & Creativity; Cultures full of Shame & Blame; and Poor Work/Life Balance. Given the initial success of the first cohort of iSPARC training, the Dare to Lead training was expanded and offered to all faculty and staff across FY23.

iSPARC Grant Support Team

During FY23, the Grant Support Team met twice monthly to provide iSPARC faculty and postdoctoral fellows with scientific and content expertise on their developing grant proposals. These internal reviews strengthen their submissions and increase likelihood of funding. The review meetings are attended by iSPARC faculty and staff with expertise in a variety of research topics and methodologies. Standing reviewers in FY23 included William McIlvane, Stephenie Lemon, Kathryn Sabella, Melissa Anderson, Dee Logan, Dan Amante, and Bo Wang.

In addition to assisting with grant proposal development, the Grant Support Team also helps with the submission process and tracks grant proposals that have been reviewed, submitted, and funded. In FY23, the Grant Support Team reviewed a total of 10 grant proposals across 18 meetings. FY23 proposals reviewed by the Grant Support Team include:

Funded!

- Promoting Access, Inclusion, and Success of Students with Emotional Disturbance in Career and Technical Education — Dept. of Education, Education Innovation and Research — **Marsha Ellison**
- Evaluating Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Therapy Toolkit for AUD and Trauma — NIAAA R01 — **Melissa Anderson**
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Community Living and Participation Among Transition Age Youth with Serious Mental Health Conditions from Disadvantaged, Vulnerable, or Marginalized Backgrounds — NIDILRR RRTC — **Kathryn Sabella**

Under Review

- Adapt4SMI: Promoting smoking cessation among people with serious mental illnesses using an adaptive text messaging program — R01 — **Megan Kelly & Raj Sadasivam**

- Building Equity in Objective Prison Classification: A Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities — NIJ — **Spencer Lawson** (Senior Research Scientist within Law & Psychiatry)
- Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity (Pathways) — PCORI — **Nancy Byatt**

Not Funded

- Examining the Underlying Mechanisms of Stress, Adverse Social Determinants, and Allostatic Load on the Obstetric and Mental Health Outcomes of Black Perinatal Individuals — F31 — **Esther Boama-Nyarko** (a trainee of Nancy Byatt)
- Factors Affecting Migraine in Sexual and Gender Minority Emerging Adults — F31 — **Ian Lane** (iSPARC Biostatistician and a doctoral student at the UMass Chan Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing)
- Recovery through Performance: A Multi-Site Feasibility Trial of Remote Group Drama Therapy in Individuals with Schizophrenia — R01 — **Xiaoduo Fan**

In Preparation

- Developing an Autism Screening & Assessment Process in Juvenile Justice (ASAP-JJ) — R34 — **Gina Vincent** & Jean Frazier

Fulfillment of the DMH Contract

Fiscal Year 2024 is off to a strong start! Several new grants have already received funding, and we continue to explore innovative opportunities to help us diversify our funding portfolio. We continue our commitment to the shared DMH and iSPARC goal of providing state-of-the-art, recovery-oriented, patient-centered care to all citizens of the Commonwealth. We look forward to another productive year in partnership with DMH!

Research Activity

These numbers represent both ongoing and new iSPARC research during Fiscal Year 2023:

Performance Measure	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of research projects approved by DMH ¹	38	40	42
Number of research proposals submitted & approved by an IRB ²	23	19	24
Number of grants submitted ³	22	15	21
Number of grants approved for funding ⁴	9	8	11

1. The number of ongoing iSPARC research projects during the fiscal year.

2. The total number of projects that had IRB approval during the fiscal year.

3. The total number of grant applications that iSPARC submitted during the fiscal year, regardless of their approval status. Some submitted grants may have received funding during the fiscal year, some may receive funding next fiscal year, and some may receive no funding.

4. The total number of new grants that either received money during the fiscal year or are approved for funding in the upcoming fiscal year.



New Grant Funding

The ongoing financial support provided by DMH confers iSPARC the ability to leverage monies from a variety of other sources in support of research and training. The figure reported below includes the portion of each grant/contract awarded in the 2023 Fiscal Year, not the total funds for life of the grant. The total is inclusive of both direct funds (monies which go directly to the project) and indirect funds (monies that support overhead on the project, the operation of iSPARC, the UMass Chan Department of Psychiatry, and UMass Chan Medical School).

Performance Measure	FY21	FY22	FY23
External funding obtained	\$10,565,941	\$10,396,644	\$11,346,921

Peer Reviewed Publications

In FY23, iSPARC faculty and staff submitted and/or published a total of 177 articles in peer-reviewed journals! Although most of our publications appear in peer-reviewed

journals, iSPARC faculty and staff also publish books, book chapters, monographs, reports, conference papers, and reviews of academic manuscripts.

Performance Measure	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of papers submitted & accepted for publication ⁵	116	138	177

Other Dissemination Efforts

iSPARC continued to conduct trainings and give presentations at a wide variety of venues throughout Fiscal Year 2023. The following numbers represent the efforts of iSPARC to distribute and disseminate information to DMH state and provider clinical workforce as well as individuals with lived experience and family members.

Performance Measure	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of presentations/trainings/webinars by iSPARC faculty and staff shared information with DMH state and provider clinical workforce, individuals with lived experience & family members	33	27	64
Number of state and provider workforce members, individuals with lived experience and family members with whom research information was shared ⁶	1,887	865	2,593

5. This number does not include self-published tip sheets and research briefs.

6. This represents the number of individuals attending iSPARC faculty and staff presentations at conferences, webinars, and trainings in Massachusetts during FY23. This does not include Massachusetts individuals accessing research information through other iSPARC mechanisms (i.e., website, listservs, and social media).

Appendix A

NEWLY-FUNDED iSPARC
RESEARCH & CONTRACTS

Title: Developing the Implementation Toolkit for Young Adult Access Centers in Massachusetts

PI: Kathryn Sabella

Funding: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health contract

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$89,217

Time Frame: 07/01/2022–03/31/2023

Description: During this project, we will create a professional development training for young adults and supervisory staff at Young Adult Access Centers across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The training will support these individuals to develop competency in delivering the DMH HYPE Course to young adults with mental health conditions. The success of this project will assist in creating a sustainable model of service delivery in career decision-making and preparing for work and school.

Title: Developing the Capacity of Young Adult Access Center Staff to Provide Career Development Activities through the HYPE Course

PI: Kathryn Sabella & Michelle Mullen

Funding: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health contract

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$52,400

Time Frame: 07/01/2022–06/30/2023

Description: Leveraging the Learning Management System platform previously used to train facilitators of the HYPE Course in Massachusetts in FY22, the HYPE team will create a sustainable model of service delivery in career decision-making and preparing for work and school. In this scope, the HYPE team proposed a Professional Development Training for young adult and supervisory staff at Young Adult Access Centers across the Commonwealth to develop competency in delivering the HYPE Course to young adults with mental health conditions.

Title: The Lifeline for Moms Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs — Year 4

PI: Nancy Byatt & Tiffany Moore Simas

Funding: Perigee Fund

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$408,750

Time Frame: 07/01/2022–06/30/2023

Description: The primary goal is to continue the multi-state National Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs which facilitates peer learning, program evaluation, and research among Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs.

Title: ACT on Vaping: Digital Therapeutic for Young Adult Vaping Cessation

PI: Megan Kelly

Funding: National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse/Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$176,920

Time Frame: 07/01/2022–06/30/2027

Description: Almost one in ten young adults report current e-cigarette use, putting them at risk of developing nicotine addiction and long-term health effects of exposure to inhaled toxicants. Despite the need for effective treatments to help these young users quit, very few treatments targeting any type of tobacco use among young adults have been evaluated, particularly for young adults who vape and have unique treatment needs. To address these needs, the study team proposes to develop and evaluate an avatar-led, digital Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) program called ACT on Vaping for young adult e-cigarette users at all stages of readiness to quit. This program builds upon an intervention framework employed successfully in previous pilot work, with high user satisfaction and very promising rates of biochemically confirmed tobacco abstinence.

Title: HYPE System of Care Project: Creating Sustainability for Career Development through a Train the Trainer Model

PI: Kathryn Sabella & Michelle Mullen

Funding: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health contract

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$73,500

Time Frame: 08/31/2022–08/30/2023

Description: In this project, the HYPE team will create a sustainable model of service delivery for young adults with mental health conditions in career development. Participants in the training of trainers will learn how to coach young adult and other staff at Young Adult Access Centers as they learn how to facilitate the HYPE Courses. Two Young Adult Access Centers will receive HYPE Course Facilitator Training through this contract, including Young Adult staff, creating sustainability in additional regions throughout the state.


Title: Promoting Access, Inclusion, and Success of Students with Emotional Disturbance in Career and Technical Education

PI: Marsha Ellison & Colleen McKay

Funding: National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$599,725

Time Frame: 08/31/2022–08/30/2025

Description: During this project, the team will revise and pilot test [*Translating Evidence to Support Transitions in Career and Technical Education \(TEST-CTE\)*](#) , a guide for special educators on how to promote CTE for special education students with emotional disturbance. Prior research has shown improved employment outcomes after four credits of high school CTE for these students, leading to the development of TEST-CTE. Project goals are to: 1) revise the existing TEST-CTE guide to assure a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens; and 2) conduct a randomized pilot of TEST-CTE. Project objectives are to: 1) revise the existing TEST-CTE guide based on the results of three focus groups with students of color, and 2) assess feasibility and acceptability of recruiting schools and students, teacher training, and collecting student special education plans, high school transcripts, and self-report data. Student-level outcomes are assessed for CTE credits earned, presence of post-secondary transition goals for careers, student vocational self-efficacy, and stigma

about CTE coursework. Project outcomes include a revised TEST-CTE guide that assures cultural relevance for minority students, and tested study processes and outcomes. With these products TEST-CTE will be positioned for a subsequent efficacy trial, one that holds promise for improved employment of youth with emotional disturbance.

Title: Development and Evaluation of an Avatar Guided Mobile Health Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Misuse and Suicidality

PI: Kathryn Sabella (site PI)

Funding: National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$5,041

Time Frame: 09/01/2022–08/31/2023

Description: Emerging adults have higher rates of binge drinking, thoughts of suicide, and suicide attempts than any other age group, but very low use of substance use treatment. This project seeks to develop a mobile health intervention guided by an avatar for emerging adults who visit the emergency department and who binge drink and experience thoughts of suicide. Because emerging adults prefer mobile health and self-guided interventions and such technology is widely accessible, the proposed mobile health intervention could offer significant public health benefit in reducing alcohol use disorders and suicidal thoughts in emerging adults.

Title: Development of a Text Intervention for Perinatal Depression

PI: Kimberly Yonkers

Funding: National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Mental Health

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$767,056

Time Frame: 09/01/2022–06/30/2025

Description: This application is aimed at development and preliminary testing of a text messaging intervention that will reduce the risk of a major depressive episode and worsening depressive symptoms in perinatal individuals. The system would screen pregnant individuals, send tailored text messages with links to enhanced content, and would include a peer chat function. This accessible text platform would leverage both the ease of use inherent in text messages and the power of enhanced content drawn evidence from based behavioral interventions.

Title: Using Rural Community Paramedicine to Engage Lower-Motivated Smokers: Spreading an Effective mHealth-Assisted Intervention to Motivate Cessation

PI: Rajani Sadasivam & Thomas Houston

Funding: National Institutes of Health (NIH)/National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$3,967,805

Time Frame: 09/05/2022–08/31/2027

Description: We propose a multi-level trial to test 1) novel implementation programs in rural counties designed to increase access to 2) recent advances in tobacco control services for people who are not-yet-ready-to-quit smoking. In this field, most trials have focused

only on those already ready-to-quit. Thus, the proposed trial addresses an important knowledge gap critical to advance tobacco control in rural areas.

Title: Collaborative Hub for Emerging Adult Recovery Research (CHEARR)

PI: Maryann Davis (site PI)

Funding: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$71,948

Time Frame: 09/30/2022–09/29/2025

Description: The consequences of the opioid epidemic have been particularly devastating to emerging adults (ages 16–25). Recovery supports services have become common in community settings and have the potential to help emerging adults taking medications for opioid use disorder to maintain long-term reductions in opioid use, to return to functioning, and to flourish, yet infrastructure to support science on these topics is lacking. This project will develop a network of advanced researchers, recovery support specialists, emerging adults in recovery, and other key partner communities to help rapidly advance the science on recovery support services, particularly clinical continuing care, that are specialized for emerging adults who take or who have taken medications for opioid use disorder.

Title: Creation and Validation of a Detention Screening Tool for Risk of Serious Harm

PI: Gina Vincent

Funding: Colorado Division of Youth Services

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$200,000

Time Frame: 10/01/2022-02/29/2024

Description: During this project, the team will develop and validate an innovative detention screening tool that detects substantial risk for serious harm to inform short-term, pre-trial detention hold versus community risk management decisions for all youth defendants in Colorado.

Title: Lifeline for Parents

PI: Nancy Byatt & Jessica L. Griffin

Funding: Private Sponsor

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$250,000

Time Frame: 11/01/2022-12/31/2023

Description: Lifeline for Parents aims to develop a model of a peer support approach for new parents. Lifeline for Parents will build on our existing scalable models of perinatal mental health care and early childhood trauma interventions. Lifeline for Parents: Phase I will focus on the development of the model using an iterative process incorporating feedback of key community partners in two working groups comprised of interdisciplinary experts. Through this process, the team aims to identify best practices in peer support and determine mechanisms for accessing these services.

Title: Heart, Soul, & Recovery (HSR): Integrated Cardiovascular Risk Reduction, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care for African American/Black Men with Criminal Legal System Involvement

PI: Ayorkor Gaba

Funding: NHLBI PRIDE Cardiovascular Disease Small Research Program

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$11,486

Time Frame: 11/01/2022-10/31/2023

Description: This project utilizes a community-engaged approach to culturally tailor an existing efficacious co-occurring disorder intervention to dually address cardiovascular disease risk factors and co-occurring disorders among Black men with criminal legal involvement.

Title: Developing a Scalable Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety in Obstetric Settings

PI: Martha Zimmermann

Funding: Mentored Career Development (KL2) Award, KL2TR001454

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$265,870

Time Frame: 11/01/2022-10/29/2024

Description: This project focuses on developing and iteratively refining the Prevent Perinatal Anxiety intervention, a multicomponent digital health intervention to prevent perinatal anxiety disorders. Community engagement, user-centered design, and implementation approaches will be used to adapt an Anxiety Sensitivity Intervention for digital health and for integration into obstetric settings to maximize intervention reach.

Title: Community-based, Family-centered, Trauma-informed Approach to Timely Detection and Management of Early Postpartum Hypertension

PI: Nancy Byatt

Funding: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)/Yale

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$811,772

Time Frame: 11/01/2022-10/31/2027

Description: The goal of this project is to improve clinical outcomes, including mental health outcomes, among postpartum at-risk women experiencing health disparities by increasing awareness, detection, and timely care of postpartum hypertension, mental health, and cardiovascular complications. The project aims to improve mean postpartum systolic blood pressure at six weeks and reduce depression severity at three months postpartum.

Title: Whole Family Wellness: Supporting Parents across Systems of Care

PI: Nancy Byatt & Elizabeth Peacock-Chambers

Funding: Apricus Principle

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$300,000

Time Frame: 01/10/2023-12/31/2025

Description: Mothering from the Inside Out (MIO) is an attachment-based parenting intervention that improves parental mental health and parent-child relationships.

It centers parent wellness and self-regulation as the foundation for a strong parent-child relationship, with a particular focus on parents who have experienced trauma, adversity, or marginalization. This project has three phases covering three years: 1) elicit input from community partners to inform the adaptation of MIO for delivery by community-based professionals; 2) adapt MIO for delivery by community-based professionals; (3) beta test the new adapted model. In year 1 (Phase 1), we will convene a working group of 6–10 key partners to inform how to best adapt MIO for community-based delivery. We will conduct focus groups and individual interviews with other key partners. In year 2 (Phase 2), we will combine Year 1 input with our team’s expertise and adapt MIO in response to our learnings from the working groups and focus groups. In year 3 (Phase 3), we will pilot test the adapted MIO and iteratively refine our approach. At the end of year 3, we will have a new scalable approach for delivering MIO in community-based settings.

Title: 2023 Competitive Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative
Local Action Research Partners

PI: Dara Drawbridge

Funding: MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$54,421

Time Frame: 01/01/2023-12/31/2023

Description: This project provides strategic, analytic, and research support to the City of Fitchburg in their efforts to reduce gang violence. Assesses barriers and facilitators to implementation of Shannon-funded programs and develops an implementation blueprint for Shannon programs in the Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster areas.

Title: Transforming and Expanding Access to Mental Health Care in Urban Pediatrics (TEAM UP for children)

PI: Chris Sheldrick

Funding: Smith Family Foundation & Klarman Foundation

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$221,934

Time Frame: 03/06/2023-05/31/2025

Description: This project aims to promote positive child health and well-being by building the capacity of urban community health centers to deliver high quality, evidence-based integrated behavioral health care to children and families. By strengthening the ability of community health centers to recognize emerging child behavioral health issues and intervene early with appropriate treatment, TEAM UP aims to improve life outcomes for tens of thousands of low-income children in Greater Boston and Gateway cities, and beyond. Our vision is that all children in families will live within a community that fosters and promotes physical and behavioral health, wellness, and resilience. The goal of the project is to co-develop, evaluate, and scale a model of integrated behavioral health care suitable for federally qualified health centers.

Title: Environmental Scan for Youth Violence Prevention Programs

PI: Gina Vincent

Funding: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$228,769

Time Frame: 04/01/2023-09/30/2024

Description: This is an inter-agency collaboration to identify and recommend effective youth violence prevention programs that could serve youth and young adults in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and involves a thorough environmental scan of programs.

Title: MRWeight: Medical Residents Learning Weight Management Counseling Skills — A Multi-Modal, Technology-Assisted, Spaced Education Program

PI: Rajani Sadasivam & Judith Ockene

Funding: National Institutes of Health (NIH)/National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$3,779,036

Time Frame: 05/02/2023-02/29/2028

Description: Overweight and obesity affect a large majority of Americans, increasing their risk for multiple chronic illnesses. It is recommended that physicians provide weight management counseling (WMC) to patients who are overweight or obese, but physicians have limited WMC training. Residency is an ideal time to teach physicians WMC skills, but residency programs lack an evidence-based curriculum to support this need. Our study addresses this gap by testing MRWeight, an innovative technology-assisted spaced education program designed specifically for teaching WMC to medical residents.

Title: Adapting a Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Multicomponent Intervention for Women

PI: Angela Walter & Ayorkor Gaba

Funding: UMass Lowell Office of Research and Innovation 2023 Internal Seed Award

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$15,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2023-06/30/2025

Description: This project will adapt a co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder multicomponent intervention for women. The project will utilize qualitative interventions with women with COD and their providers to understand their COD care needs and a Delphi panel of diverse experts to inform the adaptation of an existing a co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder multicomponent intervention.

Title: Device-assisted Exercise Interventions and Lifestyle Changes in Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

PI: Xiaoduo Fan

Funding: Remillard Family Community Service Fund

Budget: \$19,500











Time Frame: 09/01/2023-09/01/2024

Description: To expand the walking group led by the Genesis Club, which aims to encourage individuals with serious mental illness to become more active. Each participant will receive a mobile health technology device like a Fitbit and take part in a 45-minute outdoor walking group three times a week and a weekly group education and support meeting over eight weeks.

Appendix B

iSPARC DISSEMINATION PRODUCTS

Written Products

- [Adulting Shorts: The “TEA” on IEPs Part 2](#) 
- [Mental Health Screening Tools — A Guide](#) 
- [Tips to Help People Living with Mental Health Conditions Stop Using Tobacco Products](#) 
- [Lost in Transition: The Journey from Pediatric to Adult Care for Youth with Mental Health Conditions](#) 
- [3 Tips to Improve Communication with Your Youth & Young Adults](#) 
- [Adulting Shorts: The "TEA" on IEPs Part 3](#) 
- [Why and How Electronic Job Coaches Improve Employment for People with Disabilities](#) 
- [My “Must Have” Papers](#)  (updated for 2023)
- [Factors that Influence the Continuous Pursuit of Education, Training, and Employment among Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions](#) 
- [Applying for a Job: The Young Adults Guide, Revised 2023](#) 




Webinars

- [Transforming Community Mental Healthcare: How to Grow the Youth & Young Adult Peer Support Workforce](#) 
- [Why and How Electronic Job Coaches Improve Employment for People with Disabilities](#) 

Podcasts










- [S.T.A.Y. Tuned: Supporting Transition-Age Youth Podcast](#) , Episodes 1 – 9

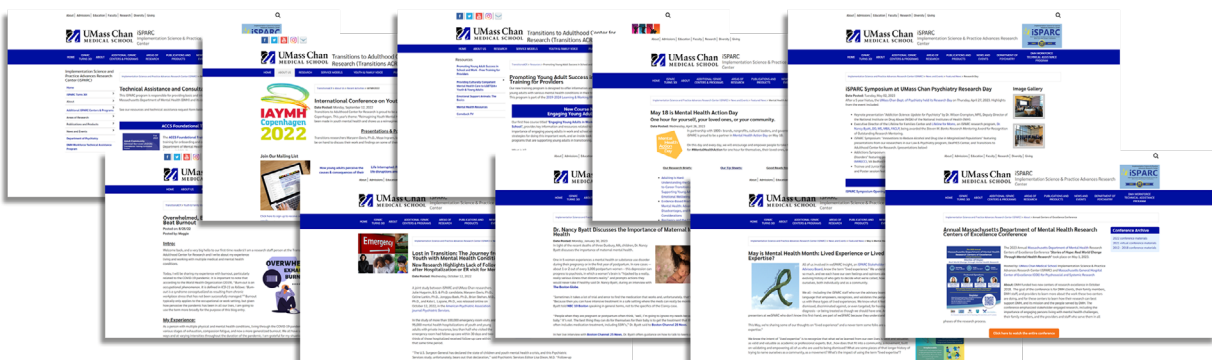
Videos

- [Why and How Electronic Job Coaches Improve Employment for People with Disabilities](#) 
- [Getting to Know iSPARC, a MA DMH Center of Excellence at UMass Chan Medical School](#) 



Webpages

- [Technical Assistance and Consultation Program](#) 
- [Overwhelmed, Exhausted, Burned Out...Oh My! 5 Strategies to Beat Burnout](#) 
- [6th Annual International Association for Youth Mental Health \(IAYMH\) Conference](#) 
- [Lost in Transition: The Journey from Pediatric to Adult Care for Youth with Mental Health Conditions](#) 
- [Promoting Young Adult Success in School and Work — Free Training for Providers](#)
- [Dr. Nancy Byatt Discusses the Importance of Maternal Mental Health](#) 
- [May 18 is Mental Health Action Day](#) 
- [May is Mental Health Month: Lived Experience or Lived Expertise?](#) 
- [iSPARC Symposium at UMass Chan Psychiatry Research Day](#) 
- [2023 Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference](#) 





Appendix C

NEW iSPARC PEER-REVIEWED
PUBLICATIONS

- Autin, K. L., Allan, B. A., Blustein, D. L., Kozan, S., Sharone, O., **Stevenson, B. J.**, Cinamon, R. G., Ferreira, J., & Thompson, M. N. (2022). The Work Intervention Network (WIN): Foundations of a holistic vocational intervention. *Journal of Career Assessment*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10690727221138619>
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- Davis, M.**, Koroloff, N., **Mizrahi, R.**, & Morrison, E. (2022). Collaboration between mental health and vocational rehabilitation programs for transition-age youth vocational outcomes. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 45(4), 303–313. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000539>

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