



CULTIVATING REAL-LIFE CHANGE

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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 (CoE) located within the Department of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School. In FY24, 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.

iSPARC's work has focused on key strategic priorities for DMH. First, this year, the iSPARC Technical Assistance Program contributed to work on elucidating key factors involved in reducing the incidence of inpatient aggression at DMH-funded facilities. This collaborative effort with DMH and the Massachusetts General Hospital Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research, was an excellent and fruitful collaboration to understand patient and environmental factors that could be targeted in improving the experience of both staff and patients at DMH-funded inpatient facilities. We look forward to our continued partnership on this critical work in FY25.

iSPARC also made substantial strides in targeting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within our Center, including workforce enrichment and our research program. We offered several DEI-focused seminars this past year to our iSPARC staff and faculty (e.g., quantitative methodologies that highlight DEI factors, education on microaggressions, research focused on improving the behavioral health of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds) and we included key discussions on diversity at our iSPARC retreat. Our iSPARC DEI survey indicated that we have made progress in hiring a more diverse workforce at iSPARC. We have also developed an action plan for addressing key DEI areas, including more DEI trainings for staff and faculty, and DEI-focused professional development seminars. In FY24, we made plans for the establishment of an iSPARC DEI committee to continue this focused work. In addition, Dr. Kathryn Sabella, the Director of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research was awarded a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on

community living and participation among transition age youth with serious mental health conditions from disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalized backgrounds. This RRTC involves several critical research and knowledge translation projects to improve the behavioral health of transition age youth from marginalized backgrounds. This exciting RRTC involves several faculty members from across iSPARC engaging in this much needed research.

In FY24, iSPARC had an impactful retreat that brought staff and faculty together to discuss our work and the future of the center. In this retreat, we clarified our center's values that permeate our research, technical assistance, community engagement, and knowledge translation work. These values, Support/Compassion, Inclusion, Trust, Respect, Collaboration/Teamwork, and Communication have helped to ground iSPARC in how we work together and with our shareholders. We have instituted a Values Award where staff and faculty recognize each other and themselves for living up to these values in their work. We will continue to integrate these values into the work we do as a Center and how we interact with the community.

FY24 was an excellent year of growth and achievements for iSPARC. Our Center has initiated several new and innovative projects to improve the behavioral health of individuals with mental health disorders. We welcomed five new members to our faculty — including two new members, **Lourah Kelly, PhD**, and **Shaobing Su, PhD**, and three staff members who transitioned to the faculty, including **Michelle Mullen, PhD**, **Spencer Lawson, PhD** and **Michelle Crist, PhD**. Additionally, we successfully recruited **Xihan Yang, PhD**, as a postdoctoral fellow to work in **Dr. Su's** Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCD) Lab. With each new addition to our Center, we were attentive to engaging colleagues who embody the mission and values of iSPARC and DMH.

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.

Technical Assistance Highlights

The iSPARC Technical Assistance/Consultation and External Funding Program is responsible for providing basic technical assistance services and intensive implementation support to MA DMH and its contracted providers. Highlights from this program for FY24 include:

- The iSPARC Technical Assistance program supported the DMH Office of Inpatient Management by conducting facilitating listening sessions with DMH hospital staff on strategies DMH can use adopt to prevent, treat, and manage patient aggressive behavior. Staff feedback will be used to inform the development of strategies for inpatient aggression management.
- The TA/Consultation Program continues to work closely with DMH to improve fidelity to its Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model among contracted agencies statewide. In FY24, iSPARC completed the full implementation of the following two products: (1) ACCS Best Practice Structured Interview Process for Clinicians (“Hiring Packet”), a structured hiring packet for ACCS clinicians is geared towards hiring qualified individuals with a diversity and inclusion lens, and (2) the ACCS Foundational Training Curriculum Packet, a training curriculum that contains ten training modules designed to cover foundational principles and ACCS practices for all personnel types, from direct care staff to clinicians. These products are publicly available on the [DMH website](#)  and the [iSPARC Technical Assistance webpage](#) .
- The Guidelines for Supervision of [Peer Supporters in Massachusetts ACCS](#)  (“Guidelines”) is a document produced by the ACCS Peer Support Supervision Workgroup in collaboration with iSPARC. The Guidelines list eleven core values, identify a practice phrase for each value, and suggest separate steps to follow to practice the value, both for the Peer Supporters and for the Supervisors. The Guidelines are one of four recommendations in the report titled The Status of Peer Support Supervision in ACCS. The pilot and then full implementation roll-out of the Guidelines in ACCS agencies were directed by three Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committees. These committees were comprised of peer leadership from the five area ACCS agencies and facilitated by four DMH Directors of Recovery and an Agency Director of Recovery Services. iSPARC assisted some committees in identifying Peer Supporter agency representatives and provided technical assistance and resources to the Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committees throughout the process. In June 2024, iSPARC organized a meeting of all five Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee facilitators to review the process used in each area and to consider consensus recommendations for next steps. The committee facilitators, in collaboration with iSPARC, will send a summative report and recommendations to DMH in FY25.
- iSPARC created a FY24 work plan to develop a Coaching Model approach for ACCS staff related to increasing staff skills for delivering evidence-based practices (EBPs). To begin, iSPARC conducted an extensive literature search on

coaching models and enabling factors for setting up an agency coaching culture. iSPARC created and distributed a baseline survey regarding perspectives about and utilization of staff coaching and supervision to representatives from ACCS provider agencies between December 2023 and January 2024. The response rate was high, with 17 out of 18 agencies completing the survey. iSPARC submitted a final report on the survey results with recommendations to DMH in March: *ACCS Implementation Enhancement Project: Stage 2 Coaching Evaluation Results*.

Highlights of Collaborations with DMH and Other State Agencies

In addition to technical assistance-related collaborations, iSPARC faculty and staff 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 our collaborations during FY24 are outlined below.

- Dr. Margaret Guyer, MA DMH Director of Research and Workforce Development, **Dr. Melissa Anderson**, and the **DeafYES! team** are collaborating to disseminate Deaf mental health training and Deaf-accessible suicide prevention training across the Commonwealth. The Deaf and hearing co-led team from Massachusetts is using SAMHSA Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funds administered by National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) executive summary 11 to prepare community stakeholders to better serve Deaf people who are in crisis. One of their major initiatives is the establishment of an annual three-day training for mental health providers and interpreters who work in the field of Deaf mental health. Leveraging community-engaged development and implementation approaches, this training will provide attendees with comprehensive education on mental health experiences of diverse Deaf people; how to provide services through an intersectional lens; the impact of language deprivation; communitybased suicide prevention efforts; and formal assessment of suicide risk. The training format includes didactic presentations by Deaf and signing experts, breakout rooms with hands-on practice opportunities, a lived experience panel, and screening training films such as the Deaf-accessible adaptation of [Question. Persuade. Refer. \(QPR\) a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training](#) ². This work will continue through June 2026.
- Throughout FY24, work on the Young Adult Access Center Toolkit continued to be finalized based on ongoing conversations with **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**, Heidi Holland, Director, MA DMH Young Adult Transitional Services, and Betsy Edes, MA DMH Program Director.
- In FY24, the Central Massachusetts Tobacco-Free Community Partnership (CMTFCP) continued to work on issues of food insecurity and transportation for the Department of Public Health. In August 2023, **Colleen McKay** and **Noriasha**

Mensah published [Resources for Addressing Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health in Worcester, Massachusetts](#) ², a list of resources available in the Worcester community to help families and community partners navigate local and state resources to address food insecurity and other social determinants of health.

- 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. Project NORTH offers confidential and 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 to court users. The project team includes **Dr. Dara Drawbridge**, **Dr. Michelle Crist**, **Jinnia Baiye**, **Emily Zitek**, **Joshua Rumbut**.
- Starting in April 2023, **Dr. Gina Vincent** and the Law & Psychiatry Program and iSPARC team (**Dr. Maryann Davis**, **Rachael Perrault**, **Morgan Rao**, and **Kayla Carew**) initiated an Environmental Scan of effective youth and young adult early violence intervention programs and practices for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Child, Youth and Family Services. This work is funded by SAMHSA as a part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. The team worked closely with Dr. Kelly English, Deputy Commissioner Child Youth & Family Services, and Omar Irizarry, DMH Director of Cross Agency Initiatives. In FY24, the team made recommendations to DMH after completing a comprehensive environmental scan to 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. The team provided a full report and set of recommendations to DMH about potential programming to implement in Massachusetts.

iSPARC Faculty & Staff

In FY24, iSPARC made significant strides to build on our already strong foundation:



Managed a research portfolio totaling **\$15,445,962** in grants and contract funding



Submitted **29** new grant and contract proposals



Were awarded **10** new grants and contracts



Published **67** peer-reviewed journal articles



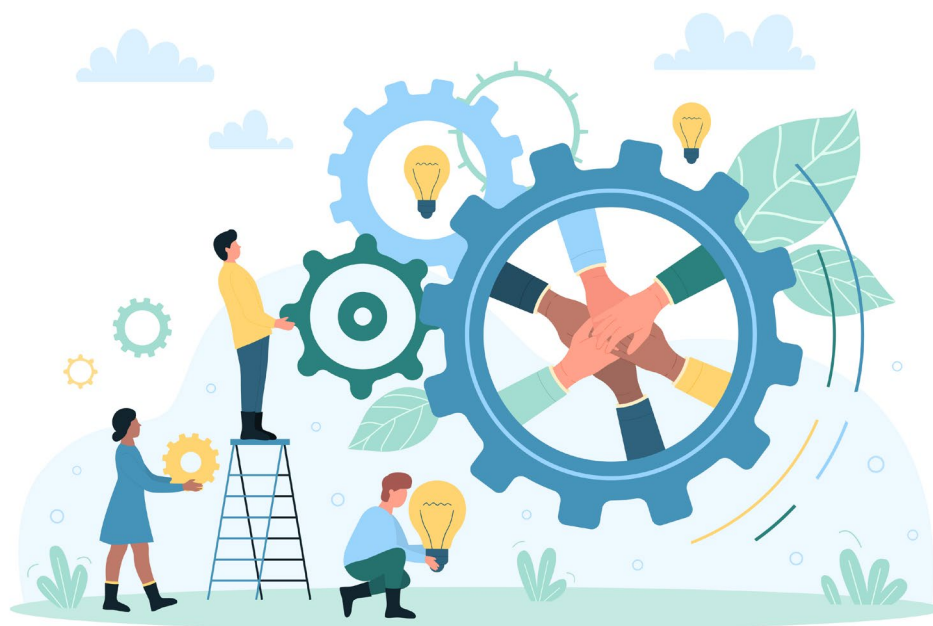
Submitted **50** peer-reviewed journal articles

iSPARC is home to investigators from the UMass Chan Medical School Departments of Psychiatry 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

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 *forHealth* Consulting (formerly known as 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.

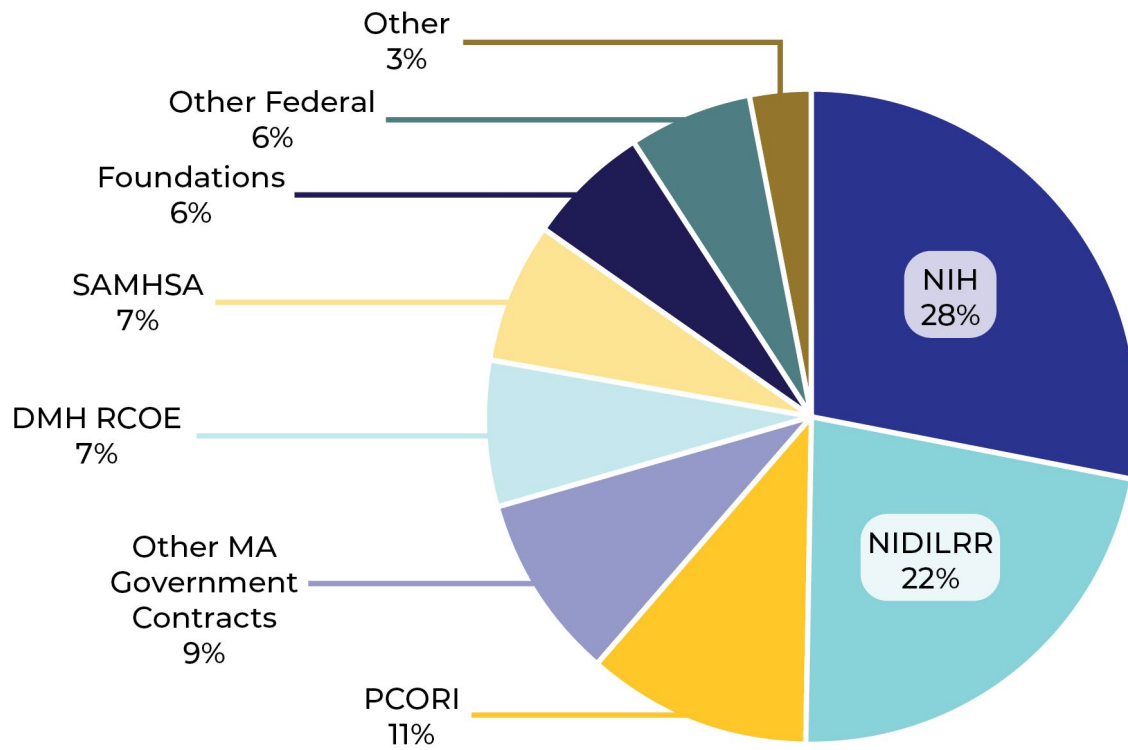


iSPARC Funding Sources FY 2024

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 FY24 yielded a return of \$13.40 to the Commonwealth to fund our portfolio of research, training, technical assistance, and service delivery.

Chart 1. Funding Sources




Top 5 Research Moments of FY24

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

1. Dr. Melissa Anderson was awarded a 3.6-million-dollar grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to conduct the first-ever full-scale psychotherapy clinical trial in the Deaf community. This study will compare Signs of Safety, a Deaf-accessible therapy toolkit for treating alcohol use disorder and PTSD, to treatment as usual. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).
2. In a four-year project funded by the National Institute of Justice through the W.E.B. Du Bois Program of Research on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Justice System, Drs. **Spencer Lawson** and **Gina Vincent** of the Law & Psychiatry Program are

collaborating with the MA Department of Correction to (1) examine the magnitude and drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in their Objective Point Base Classification System, (2) facilitate adjustments to their classification system to reduce observed tool bias and disparities, and (3) pilot the adjustments to evaluate their differential (or equitable) impact on custody level placements and access to programming.

3. In dual partnership with Postpartum Support International, one of our longtime community collaborators, **Dr. Nancy Byatt** was awarded a \$21 million contract from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to conduct the national [Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity](#)  (Pathways) study. Pathways was proposed in direct response to concerns expressed by Lifeline for Families' Individuals with Lived Expertise of Perinatal Mental Health Conditions Advisory Council about ongoing gaps and inequities in perinatal mental health care. In the Pathways study, they will compare a healthcare system-focused intervention, PProgram in Support of Moms (PRISM), to a healthcare system and community-level-focused intervention, Healthcare-Community Partnership, in 32 obstetric practices in seven states across the U.S. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).
4. **Dr. Shaobing Su** started work on her National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)-funded R00, *Effects of Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Understanding Mental Health among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Children*. This grant supports mixed-methods community-based participatory research about early and prolonged parent-child separation and child mental health among separated-reunited Chinese immigrant families.
5. In September 2023, **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** and Dr. Elizabeth Thomas at Temple University (co-PI), were awarded a new NIDILRR-funded Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) aimed at improving the community participation outcomes of transition age youth with serious mental health conditions from backgrounds that have been marginalized or disadvantaged. The CIRC Center will partner with youth to generate new knowledge regarding developmentally appropriate interventions and key systems and policy issues, and provide training, dissemination, and technical assistance activities to a variety of interested parties (e.g., youth, family members, providers). Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

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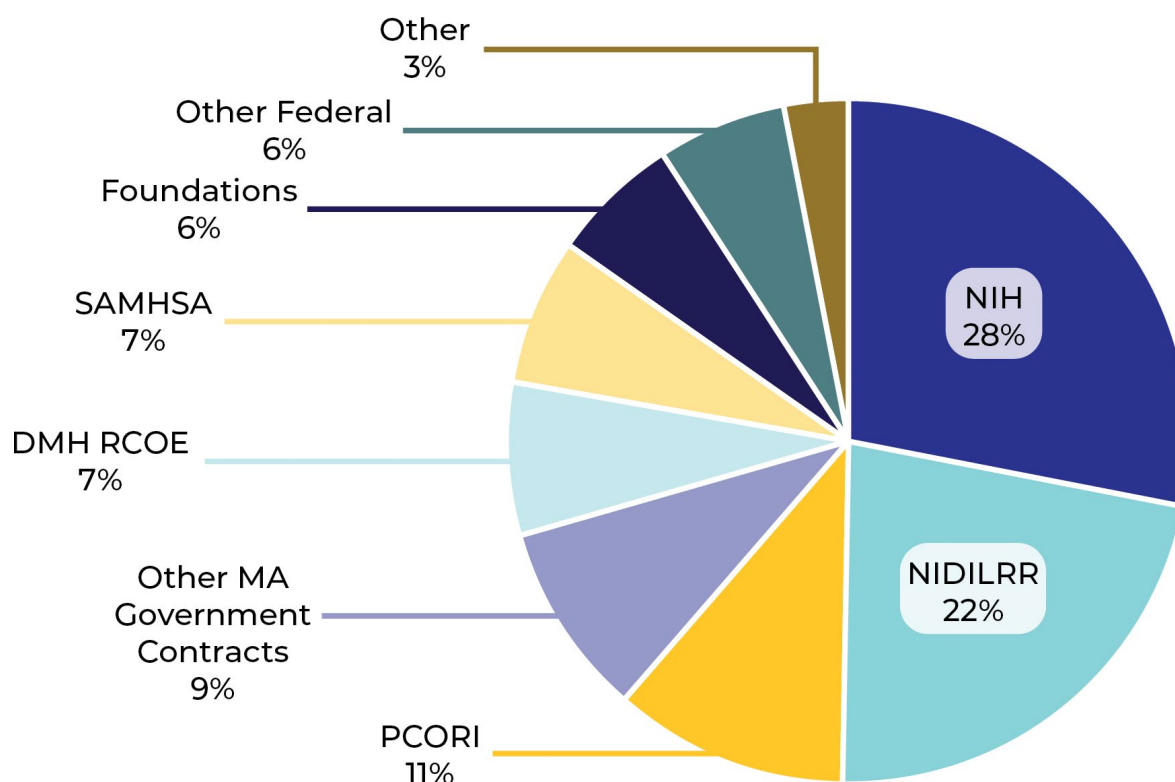
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

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

1. Dr. Margaret Guyer, MA DMH Director of Research and Workforce Development, **Dr. Melissa Anderson**, and the **DeafYES! team** are collaborating to disseminate Deaf mental health training and Deaf-accessible suicide prevention training across the Commonwealth. The Deaf and hearing co-led team from Massachusetts is using SAMHSA Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funds administered by National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to prepare community stakeholders to better serve Deaf people who are in crisis. One of their major initiatives is the establishment of an annual three-day training for mental health providers and interpreters who work in the field of Deaf mental health. Leveraging community-engaged development and implementation approaches, this training will provide attendees with comprehensive education on mental health experiences of diverse Deaf people; how to provide services through an intersectional lens; the impact of language deprivation; community-based suicide prevention efforts; and formal assessment of suicide risk. The training format includes didactic presentations by Deaf and signing experts, breakout rooms with hands-on practice opportunities, a lived experience panel, and screening training films such as the Deaf-accessible adaptation of [Question. Persuade. Refer. \(QPR\) a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training](#) . This work will continue through June 2026. **Dr. Melissa Anderson** was also awarded a 3.6-million-dollar grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to conduct the first-ever full-scale psychotherapy clinical trial in the Deaf community. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).
2. In a four-year project funded by the National Institute of Justice through the W.E.B. Du Bois Program of Research on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Justice System, **Drs. Spencer Lawson** and **Gina Vincent** of the Law & Psychiatry Program are collaborating with the MA Department of Correction to (1) examine the magnitude and drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in their Objective Point Base Classification System, (2) facilitate adjustments to their classification system to reduce observed tool bias and disparities, and (3) pilot the adjustments to evaluate their differential (or equitable) impact on custody level placements and access to programming.
3. In dual partnership with Postpartum Support International, one of our longtime community collaborators, **Dr. Nancy Byatt** was awarded a \$21 million contract from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to conduct the national [Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity](#)  (Pathways) study. Pathways was proposed in direct response to concerns expressed by Lifeline for Families' Individuals with Lived Expertise of Perinatal Mental Health Conditions Advisory Council about ongoing gaps and inequities in perinatal mental health care. In the Pathways study, they will compare a healthcare system-focused intervention, PProgram in Support of

Moms (PRISM), to a healthcare system and community-level-focused intervention, Healthcare-Community Partnership, in 32 obstetric practices in seven states across the U.S. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

4. **Dr. Shaobing Su** started work on her National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)-funded R00, *Effects of Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Understanding Mental Health among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Children*. This grant supports mixed-methods community-based participatory research about early and prolonged parent-child separation and child mental health among separated-reunited Chinese immigrant families.
5. In September 2023, **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** and Dr. Elizabeth Thomas at Temple University (co-PI), were awarded a new NIDILRR-funded Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) aimed at improving the community participation outcomes of transition age youth with serious mental health conditions from backgrounds that have been marginalized or disadvantaged. The CIRC Center will partner with youth to generate new knowledge regarding developmentally appropriate interventions and key systems and policy issues, and provide training, dissemination, and technical assistance activities to a variety of interested parties (e.g., youth, family members, providers). Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

2024 Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference

On May 13, 2024, iSPARC and the MGH Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research co-hosted the 2024 Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence.

The theme of this virtual conference was “[Innovative Prevention and Treatment Strategies for Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges](#).” Over 170 individuals attended the conference.

DMH Commissioner, Brooke Doyle, MEd, LMHC, provided opening remarks and additional remarks were given by CoE Directors **Drs. Megan Kelly** and Cori Cather. Presentations were given by faculty members from both Centers — Drs. Eden Evins, MGH; **Lourah Kelly**, iSPARC; Randi Schuster, MGH; and **Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins**, iSPARC/DeafYES.

Presentations focused on the intersection of mental health and substance use challenges, including results from a nationally representative U.S. survey demonstrating who has the highest risk of co-occurring substance use disorders and suicide risk; how schools can help to prevent substance use and co-occurring disorders; and a Deaf-accessible therapy toolkit for co-occurring trauma and addiction.

Last but not least, there was the panel discussion on the topic of *Between Silos: Connecting in the Middle as Peer Specialists and Recovery Coaches*. Panelists included Val Comerford, Central MA DMH; Scott Francis, MA Organization for Addiction Recovery; and Celeste Clerk, Western MA DMH.

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

2024 Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence

Innovative Prevention and Treatment Strategies for Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges



**MONDAY
MAY 13TH**



**12:30PM-
4:30PM**



**ZOOM
WEBINAR**

With opening remarks from **Brooke Doyle, MEd, LMHC**, Commissioner of the Massachusetts (MA) Department of Mental Health (DMH)

Featured Speakers



**Eden Evins,
MD, MPH**
Massachusetts
General Hospital



**Lourah
Kelly, PhD**
UMass Chan
Medical School



**Randi
Schuster, PhD**
Massachusetts
General Hospital



**Melissa
Anderson, PhD**
UMass Chan
Medical School



**Alexander
Wilkins, PhD**
UMass Chan
Medical School

Panel Members



**Val Comerford,
CPS, FPS, COAPS**
Central MA DMH



**Scott Francis, BA,
CPS, COAPS**
MA Organization for
Addiction Recovery



**Celeste M.
Clerk, CPS**
Western MA
Department of
Mental Health

Register: <http://tinyurl.com/DMH-Conf-24>

ASL interpreter services & CEUs for Psychology, RN, Social Work, LMHC and OT will be provided



Mass
DMH
Department of
Mental Health



MGH
1811



Center of Excellence
for Psychosocial and Systemic Research



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL




Implementation Science & Practice
Advances Research Center
iSPARC
Promoting Mental and Behavioral Health Services for
Better Lives and Stronger Communities

Technical Assistance/ Consultation and External Funding Program

The iSPARC Technical Assistance/Consultation and External Funding Program was co-led by Drs. **Gina Vincent** and **Marsha Ellison** through March 2024, and then led by **Dr. Ellison** for the remainder of the fiscal year. The Program is responsible for providing basic technical assistance services and intensive implementation support to MA DMH and its contracted providers.

Dr. Valerie Perkoski joined the iSPARC Technical Assistance Program as an Implementation Specialist in December 2024 and assumed the role of Deputy Lead in June 2024. The program also benefited by the participation of program implementation specialists **Maryann Preskul-Ricca** and **Alexis Kirkland**, Research Coordination by **Morgan Rao**, and expert consultation by **Dr. Marianne Farkas** from the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University.

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 FY24, we received 14 new requests for basic TA, which totaled 38 hours (about 3 days) 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).

Basic TA highlights from FY24 include:

- **Amanda Tower**, Grant Project Manager at the Office of Learning and Community Engagement at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), reached out on August 3, 2023 to request a speaker to talk about “Communities of Practice” at an upcoming national VR Workforce Development workgroup meeting. She was referred to us by **Amanda Baczko** at MRC. Based on her work with iSPARC’s CeKTER project, **Jean Wnuk** presented at the monthly Workforce Development meeting on December 5, 2023.

- Dr. Nev Jones, Assistant Professor from University of Pittsburg, invited **Drs. Marsha Ellison** and **Michelle Mullen** to participate in the virtual National College Campus Mental Health Convening on October 4, 2023. The event is a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute-Funded (PCORI) convening that focuses on addressing accommodations, crisis response and reintegration. **Drs. Mullen** and **Ellison** attended the symposium and attended a breakout panel. Each shared their perspectives on the summaries that were provided. Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research resources were shared.
- Haliegh Baker, BSN, RN-BC from a Metro-Boston DMH Community Mental Health Center, referenced our report on [Resources for Addressing Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health in Worcester, Massachusetts](#) and requested a similar tip sheet with resources and programs in the Metro-Boston Area. **Colleen McKay** provided Ms. Baker with resources in the Boston area.



Intensive Technical Assistance (Implementation Support)

Inpatient Listening Sessions

In FY 24, the iSPARC Technical Assistance program supported the DMH Office of Inpatient Management by conducting facilitating listening sessions with DMH hospital staff on strategies DMH can use adopt to prevent, treat, and manage patient aggressive behavior. This effort was done alongside our partners at the Massachusetts General Hospital Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research. For this effort, **Drs. Gina Vincent** and **Megan Kelly** coordinated with DMH hospitals to listen to staff on inpatient units about their thoughts and recommendations for reducing inpatient aggression and supporting staff on inpatient units. **Drs. Vincent, Kelly**, and the iSPARC TA team relayed this information to DMH. Staff feedback will be used to inform the development of strategies for inpatient aggression management.

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS)

The TA/Consultation Program continues to work closely with DMH to improve fidelity to its Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model among contracted agencies statewide. 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 FY24 were: (1) full implementation of the completed products for hiring clinicians and training staff; (2) assisting peer supporter committees with a pilot and subsequent full implementation of peer supervisory guidelines; and (3) the exploration and initial development of a coaching method for ACCS staff.

Full Implementation of Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum

In FY24, iSPARC completed the full implementation of the following two products:

- ACCS Best Practice Structured Interview Process for Clinicians (“Hiring Packet”)
 - This structured hiring packet for ACCS clinicians is geared towards hiring qualified individuals with a diversity and inclusion lens.
- 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.


Both products are publicly available on the [DMH website](#)  and the [iSPARC Technical Assistance webpage](#) .

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.

Regional Implementation Teams — Central/Western

iSPARC completed the implementation of the Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum in the Southeast Area and the Northeast/Metro Boston areas in FY23. In FY24, we finalized implementation in the last regions of the Commonwealth — Central and Western Massachusetts.

iSPARC worked with the DMH Directors of Community Service to identify staff from the Central and Western area agencies who could be the point people (“champions”) for their agency. These champions, along with additional representatives from each agency, became the Central/Western Regional Implementation Team. iSPARC held meetings with the Regional Implementation Team from July through November 2023 to:

- implement the hiring packet;
- implement the foundational training modules;
- request monthly survey data about their use of both; and
- receive monthly updates from the Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee, which met separately.

Utilization Surveys and Summary Report

iSPARC conducted monthly utilization surveys about the hiring packet and training curriculum with all the ACCS agencies across FY24. In February 2024, iSPARC provided DMH with a report summarizing these utilization results from all five areas during the staggered regional roll-out periods in the report: *ACCS Implementation Enhancement Project: Stage 1 Utilization Results for All DMH Regions Report*. Report highlights:

➤ Hiring Packet:

- The hiring packet was used 44 times, which exceeded the total number of interviews (35) compiled by the agencies. The agencies would sometimes use the packet for non-ACCS positions.
- Thirteen out of thirty-five ACCS interviews (37%) did not utilize the hiring packet, indicating an overall utilization rate of 63%.
- The hiring packet was utilized 100% in four out of ten agencies that conducted interviews. The most common reason for not using the hiring packet was lack of interviews during the data collection period.

➤ Foundational Training Curriculum:

- A total of 62 trainings were delivered over the four-to-five-month roll out periods in the regions, with 29 of these trainings using the ACCS Foundational Training Curriculum modules, a utilization rate of approximately 47%. The most frequently utilized module was Module 2: Person-Centered Care.
- The least-utilized modules were Module 3: Recovery-Oriented Approach and Module 10: Substance Use and SBRIT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment).
- Overall, trainer satisfaction with training modules ranged from 4.0–4.4, suggesting overall satisfaction with each of the ACCS Foundational Training Curriculum modules. The mean trainer satisfaction was based on a scale of 1–5. [(1) very dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, and (5) very satisfied].

Feasibility/Fidelity Assessment Survey

To ascertain the sustainability of using the Hiring Packet and the Foundational Training Curriculum, iSPARC developed a feasibility/fidelity assessment. This survey also evaluated how and if providers were using these materials with fidelity according to the implementation science framework. iSPARC received input about the feasibility/fidelity assessment from providers on the Statewide Implementation Team before disseminating the survey. iSPARC disseminated the survey to representatives at all provider agencies in June 2024 and will send a final report of results to DMH in FY25.

Audit Materials to Promote Sustainability

To ensure the usability and sustainability of the Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum, iSPARC developed audit tools that Directors of Community Services may utilize during their twice-yearly contract management meetings with ACCS providers.

In June 2024, iSPARC met with DMH leadership and the Directors of Community Services to discuss these audits' format, delivery, and feasibility. Overall, the responses to these audits were positive, with most Directors of Community Services noting that they plan to incorporate them at their next contract meeting with ACCS provider agencies. iSPARC emailed these audits to all Directors of Community Services on June 24, 2024, to gather any additional feedback.

Peer Supporter Supervisory Guidelines Committees — Pilot and Full Implementation Roll-out of the Guidelines

The Guidelines for Supervision of [Peer Supporters in Massachusetts ACCS](#) ² (“Guidelines”) is a document produced by the ACCS Peer Support Supervision Workgroup in collaboration with iSPARC. The Guidelines list eleven core values, identify a practice phrase for each value, and suggest separate steps to follow to practice the value, both for the Peer Supporters and for the Supervisors. The Guidelines are one of four recommendations in the report titled The Status of Peer Support Supervision in ACCS.

The pilot and then full implementation roll-out of the Guidelines in ACCS agencies were directed by three Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committees. These committees were comprised of peer leadership from the five area ACCS agencies and facilitated by four DMH Directors of Recovery and an Agency Director of Recovery Services. iSPARC assisted some committees in identifying Peer Supporter agency representatives and provided technical assistance and resources to the Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committees throughout the process.

The Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee highlights:

- In FY24, the pilot was completed in the Northeast/Metro Boston area. This Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee was facilitated by Justin Brown (DMH Director of Recovery, Northeast Area) and Adam Whitney (Vinfen Senior Director of Recovery Services) and provided a process model for the next two committees that involved three surveys.
- The Central/Western area, facilitated by Celeste Clerk (DMH Director of Recovery, Western Area) and Val Comerford (DMH Director of Recovery, Central Area) completed the full roll-out of the Guidelines. During the process, this Peer Support Supervision Guidelines group met with the Central/Western RIT and presented recommendations about Peer Supporter participation in the onboarding of new agency staff. This group continues to meet.
- The Southeast area, facilitated by Matt Cianci (DMH Director of Recovery, Southeast Area), initiated roll-out and expects to complete the process at the beginning of FY25.

Each Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee varied the process used to discuss and introduce the Guidelines. Responding to an initial survey used by all three committees,

agencies generally agreed that the Guidelines were applicable to their agencies and doable, while also reporting various barriers to implementation (e.g., lack of staff and time). The issues of fit, feasibility, and implementation were discussed, but the differences in agencies' infrastructure and organization led to an agency-specific process of introducing the Guidelines.

ACCS provider agencies across the state are on a wide spectrum in terms of using the Guidelines – for some agencies implementation is still aspirational – for others the Guidelines' values have already been operationalized.

In June 2024, iSPARC organized a meeting of all five Peer Support Supervision Guidelines committee facilitators to review the process used in each area and to consider consensus recommendations for next steps. The committee facilitators, in collaboration with iSPARC, will send a summative report and recommendations to DMH in FY25.

Coaching Model Exploration and Development

iSPARC created a FY24 work plan to develop a Coaching Model approach for ACCS staff related to increasing staff skills for delivering evidence-based practices (EBPs). To begin, iSPARC conducted an extensive literature search on coaching models and enabling factors for setting up an agency coaching culture.

iSPARC created and distributed a baseline survey regarding perspectives about and utilization of staff coaching and supervision to representatives from ACCS provider agencies between December 2023 and January 2024. The response rate was high, with 17 out of 18 agencies completing the survey. iSPARC submitted a final report on the survey results with recommendations to DMH in March: *ACCS Implementation Enhancement Project: Stage 2 Coaching Evaluation Results*.

Report highlights include:

- There were inconsistencies in the use of coaching methods across agencies. Agency providers used supervision, coaching, or a combination of these to improve staff skills, and supervision and training were often used interchangeably as coaching methods.
- There was a lack of quantifiable measures to assist staff in skill development, with only one agency reporting the use of a quantifiable skill development measure.
- Lead Clinicians/LPHAs was the most cited job role to supervise or assist staff in improving their skills. However, most agencies did not have a designated party for coaching ACCS staff. Four agencies noted that they use different coaches for different staff.
- Recommendations included offering a webinar to educate providers on the difference between coaching and supervision, to provide agencies with a recommended coaching framework, and to provide agencies with a goal scaling process to measure staff progress.

In April 2024, iSPARC drafted a goal attainment scaling measure to assist ACCS providers with assessing staff skill development. The Statewide Implementation Team provided feedback on this draft scaling measure and comments on the best use of coaching practices within ACCS. Using this feedback and the survey data, iSPARC developed a coaching model and goal attainment scale for ACCS agencies.

The final coaching model and goal attainment scale are in the report, *ACCS Coaching: A Strengths-Based Approach*, provided to DMH in June 2024. The report has 3 parts:

- Section I defines coaching processes,
- Section II discusses strengths-based approaches utilizing personal strengths and the GROW coaching framework, and
- Section III focuses on measurement via goal scaling.

Sections II and III include examples demonstrating how this coaching approach may be used in ACCS agencies to help support staff in achieving individual and organizational goals. This coaching report completed the work of the ACCS supplement.

External Funding

Clearinghouse Project with *forHealth Consulting*

iSPARC receives funding from *forHealth Consulting* at UMass Chan Medical School (formerly Commonwealth Medicine) under their contract with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) for a Behavioral Health Workforce Training Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse provides training resources for the newly funded Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs). The role of iSPARC is to assist CHBC agencies to successfully implement the evidence-based mental health practices (EBP) that are required as part of their state contracts. During FY24, the iSPARC Technical Assistance (TA) program supported the EBP implementation driver of “competency” of clinical staff by delivering webinars, holding “community of practice” meetings, and developing and posting resources on the Clearinghouse website.

Webinars and Communities of Practice

iSPARC presented a webinar on the *Why and How of Measuring Fidelity to Evidence-based Practices in CBHCs* in October 2023. iSPARC continued this topic discussion during two Community of Practice meetings with CBHC agency leadership entitled, EBP Fidelity Monitoring Strategies, which were held in November and December 2023. These interactive discussions gave CBHC staff the opportunity to identify challenges and exchange ideas on solutions and tools to use. iSPARC summarized these discussions with a document organizing EBP fidelity monitoring strategies by Active Implementation Driver categories: organization, competency and leadership. This was shared with attendees by *forHealth*.

In February 2024, iSPARC presented a webinar on *Training and Coaching Practices*, and continued the discussion two weeks later with an interactive Community of Practice meeting. iSPARC then provided CHBC leadership with a document summarizing the topics and solutions suggested by Community of Practice participants, as well as a coaching resource document that reviewed coaching models and listed coaching resources.

iSPARC Resources on Clearinghouse Webpage

The [Technical Assistance tab](#) of the Behavioral Health Workforce Training Clearinghouse webpage provides access to the resources described above as well as resources that were developed through research conducted by iSPARC faculty and staff. Dr. Melissa Anderson and the DeafYES! Team's video, "Vital Signs" for Healthcare Providers is available as a self-paced online training for Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) and Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) staff. Additional iSPARC resources include a discussion of implementation drivers used to achieve fidelity in EBPs, a list of pertinent assessment tools for specific EBPs, and video clips of the past webinars. CBHC staff that are interested in technical assistance can reach out to iSPARC via a contact form posted on the TA webpage or through the dedicated email ClearinghouseTA@umassmed.edu.

Future Topics

A survey to determine priority training needs was conducted by *forHealth* in the Spring of 2024 which included iSPARC written questions on format and topics of future iSPARC efforts. iSPARC will work closely with *forHealth* to design training and implementation efforts on clinical supervision strategies. A focus group to further define supervision technical assistance needs is currently planned for the fall. iSPARC continues to develop content for future webinars and Communities of Practice on the implementation drivers and meets regularly with *forHealth*.

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. [24](#) – [32](#)). 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



In FY24, the HYPE team at iSPARC was awarded a HYPE Course Facilitator Training (HCFT) contract. The HCFT is a blended online training course that teaches providers in Young Adult Access Centers and other organizations the facilitation skills and content needed to facilitate career preparation courses: Career Decisions, Work Prep, and School Prep. Each course is set up similarly to a topical seminar, with six or seven 1.5-hour training sessions that combine information, activities, and home exercises designed to help prepare young adults for careers, employment, and post-secondary education. Self-led course sessions are expected to be followed by individual sessions conducted by course facilitators to support movement in career planning and participation in work and school. Leveraging HYPE's Learning Management System, the online training is conducted with asynchronous/at-your-own-pace elements and live practice, feedback, and demonstrations to increase competency and confidence.

Several major elements of the FY24 HYPE Course contract were accomplished this year: (1) revisions of training materials and training course; (2) training of The Spot at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center in Roxbury; and (3) support of previously trained sites through a series of Implementation Support sessions. The HYPE team was joined by two HYPE Course Coaches, who had been through the HCFT in FY23.

A full review of the curriculum was implemented and accompanied by a robust round of edits based on previous years' trainer experience and feedback from trainees and participants. The curriculum for the HYPE Course consists of a full set of PowerPoint slides that can be used for virtual or in-person facilitation, a Facilitator Guide, and Handouts for each session in each course (six or seven depending on the course; 19 sessions total). To house a repository of this material for trainees and to provide a conduit for training, the HYPE team created a course for each year of HCFT training. In FY24, we additionally created a Master Course, created to promote the participation of multiple groups of trainees in the future.



Work with The Spot began in July 2023 with planning and the development of a memorandum of understanding. The HCFT Training Kickoff was held in September 2023. Beginning with the Career Decisions curriculum, HYPE staff trained The Spot staff in facilitation skills, including two clinicians and the director. These facilitation skills included the training framework ROPES, paraphrasing, conducting individual sessions, and other skills that support teaching in a group context, as well as training in the content of the curriculum, which includes identifying career values, interests, and preferences, supporting standardized career assessment, career research and planning. The Spot went on to practice the content of both Work Prep and School Prep, with observation and feedback from the HYPE team. These courses are

centered around supporting young adults to Choose, Get, and Keep school and work environments and roles, and include using career assessment results to choose a vocational setting, preparation for application and interviews, and information important for keeping a job or staying in school, such as academic and workplace accommodations and skills for success. The HYPE team supported The Spot to prepare for and implement their first HYPE Course with young adults at their Center, which they completed before the end of the fiscal year.

The HYPE team also worked this year to support previously trained sites through a series of Implementation Support sessions. The HYPE team had, in FY22 – FY23, trained Young Adult Access Centers throughout the Commonwealth. Some of those sites experienced quite a bit of turnover and have lost trained staff, but others have been able to continue to implement the HYPE Course. Three sites, Open Sky's The Place of Empowerment, Gandara Center's The Impact Center, and Children's Services of Roxbury's You Got

This Center, participated in the monthly All-Site Implementation meetings, joined in the Spring by The Spot. These meetings were held to promote and support implementation: supervisors of staff were invited as well as HYPE Course-trained staff, to proffer knowledge about and encourage implementation of the HYPE Course. Meetings included course planning support, recruitment techniques, content review and booster trainings as needed by the sites. In addition to monthly meetings, additional individual-site support was offered and provided by the HYPE team.

Finally, the HYPE team has collected information from participating sites with monthly surveys and individual follow-up. Each site has implemented at least one HYPE Course. One previously trained site, Madison Park Development Corporation has implemented all 3 courses at least once and trains interns working at the site to support young adults participating in the courses. A focus group was held with Madison Park participants in July 2024 to gather their feedback on the curriculum and course, which will be used to inform future curriculum edits and training.

The HYPE team was granted a contract for FY25 that will focus on (1) conducting a needs assessment on career services and supports and (2) continuing implementation support for previously trained sites.

Healthy Transitions Evaluation Project (HT2)

During FY24, the SAMHSA Healthy Transitions evaluation team focused on sustaining data collection efforts and distributing a Data Brief. The team continued to meet regularly and support the Young Adult Access Centers in data collection and tracking of outcomes. In July 2023, Carter Pratt, of *forHealth* Consulting, attended the Healthy Transitions grantee meeting with Betsy Edes, Program Director, MA DMH. They were able to receive updates from SAMHSA and connect with other grantees to discuss items of mutual interest and concern. This year, the team renewed emphasis on increasing the National Outcome Measures (NOMS) reassessment rates and updating our outcomes tracking systems to align with evolving SAMHSA expectations. The overall Healthy Transitions grant team submitted a no-cost extension request, which was approved in March 2024. The no-cost extension activities include final data collection and reporting efforts.

Young Adult Access Center Toolkit Project



Throughout FY24, the Young Adult Access Center Toolkit continued to be finalized based on an initial draft and ongoing conversations with Heidi Holland, Director, MA DMH Young Adult Transitional Services, and Betsy Edes, MA DMH Program Director. **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** continued to meet with the DMH development team while they finalized the toolkit to prepare it for formatting. FY24 activities primarily focused on finalizing the infrastructure/organization of the Toolkit, finalizing the content, and adding in quotes from young adults and Access Center staff.

Central Massachusetts Tobacco-Free Community Partnership

In FY24, the Central Massachusetts Tobacco-Free Community Partnership (CMTFCP) continued to work on issues of food insecurity and transportation for the Department of Public Health. In August 2023, Colleen McKay and Noriasha Mensah published [Resources for Addressing Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health in Worcester, Massachusetts](#) [↗](#), a list of resources available in the Worcester community to help families and community partners navigate local and state resources to address food insecurity and other social determinants of health.

The CMTFCP team participated, in September 2023, in a wellness event hosted by El Buen Samaritano Food Program where quitting brochures and tote bags that included the quitting campaign message were handed out. The CMTFCP team also supported a statewide Restaurant Meals Program pilot where SNAP recipients who are older than 60 years old, unhoused, or disable can use their SNAP benefits to purchase meals at certain approved restaurants. There are six approved restaurants active across the state, two in Worcester.



In December 2023, Dr. Nana Yaa Marfo, Colleen McKay and Noriasha Mensah published [The Intersection Between Food Insecurity, Tobacco Use, and Upstream Factors: Where Can We Go From Here?](#) [↗](#), a report that discusses the relationship between food insecurity and tobacco use. The report included who these issues impact, how they impact health, and how upstream factors like transportation and housing can exacerbate these health issues. It also provides considerations for addressing these health concerns.

Disseminating "Vital Signs" through the Behavioral Health Clearinghouse



Dr. Melissa Anderson met with Dr. Peg Harvey, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Workforce Development Clearinghouse at forHealth Consulting, on July 19, 2023 to discuss the Behavioral Health Clearinghouse for evidence-based practice (EBP) Training in MA and how staff and providers can be trained in how to better serve diverse Deaf clients. Dr. Anderson provided Dr. Harvey with a link to the [DeafYES!](#) [↗](#) team's new healthcare provider training film, [Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients](#) [↗](#),

which was ultimately implemented as part of this initiative. A follow-up meeting with *forHealth Consulting*, **Dr. Anderson**, and several Deaf community stakeholders occurred on September 30, 2023.

Massachusetts Trainings on Serving Deaf Individuals Who Use American Sign Language



Dr. Margaret Guyer, MA DMH Director of Research and Workforce Development, **Dr. Melissa Anderson**, and the **DeafYES! team** are collaborating to disseminate Deaf mental health training and Deaf-accessible suicide prevention training across the Commonwealth. The Deaf and hearing co-led team from Massachusetts is using SAMHSA Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funds administered by National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to prepare community stakeholders to better serve Deaf people who are in crisis. One of their major initiatives is the establishment of an annual three-day training for mental health providers and interpreters who work in the field of Deaf mental health. Leveraging community-engaged development and implementation approaches, this training will provide attendees with comprehensive education on mental health experiences of diverse Deaf people; how to provide services through an intersectional lens; the impact of language deprivation; community-based suicide prevention efforts; and formal assessment of suicide risk. The training format includes didactic presentations by Deaf and signing experts, breakout rooms with hands-on practice opportunities, a lived experience panel, and screening training films such as the Deaf-accessible adaptation of [Question. Persuade. Refer. \(QPR\) a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training](#). This work will continue through June 2026.

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 is led by Co-Directors **Dr. Dara Drawbridge**, iSPARC researcher, and **Dr. Brian Daly**, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at UMass Chan and Chief Medical Officer at Community Healthlink. Work in the CoE is undertaken within three Divisions:

- **The Research, Evaluation, and Policy Division**, Co-Directed by Meaghan Dupuis (*forHealth Consulting*) and Michael Kane (*forHealth Consulting*), 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**, Co-Directed by Dr. Ayorkor Gaba (Columbia University) and Tara Dhanraj Roden (*forHealth Consulting*), 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**, Co-Directed by Drs. Drawbridge and Daly, 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* builds capacity for implementation of Risk-Need-Responsivity across 18 Community Justice Support Centers. Risk-Need-Responsivity principles guide criminal-legal systems in their efforts to improve outcomes in the community. Despite evidence of Risk-Need-Responsivity's efficacy, multi-level barriers to the implementation exist, and systems are struggling to implement this approach. This project delivers 12 to 24 months of targeted implementation support to Support Centers across Massachusetts through training & education, tools & resources, technical assistance, and quality assurance & improvement. The project team is **Dr. Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Dr. Michelle Crist** (Co-Investigator), **Charlie Clark** (Research Coordinator II), **Elena Munzell** (Research Coordinator I), and **Janelle LaPlante** (Implementation Support Specialist I).

Enhancing System Delivery of Risk-Need-Responsivity through the Voices of Those with Lived Experience

In partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, this project assists in the planning, design, and implementation of a Community Justice Support Center Community Advisory Board, comprised of people with lived experience in the Massachusetts criminal-legal system. The aim of this Board is to become a resource to

Community Justice Support Centers and communities across Massachusetts by raising awareness, providing advice, and promoting solutions to issues impacting people involved with the criminal-legal system. The project team is **Drs. Michelle Crist** (Project Leader) and **Dara Drawbridge** (Co-Lead).

Reimagining Community Service: A Strength Based Approach

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 as a program that improves outcomes in the community by bolstering strengths in community, peer, and individual domains. The project team is **Drs. Michelle Crist** (Project Leader) and **Dara Drawbridge** (Co-Lead).

Project Navigation, Outreach, Recovery, Treatment and Hope (NORTH): Implementation Support

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. Project NORTH offers confidential and 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 to court users. The project team is **Dr. Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Dr. Michelle Crist** (Co-Investigator), **Jinnia Baiye** (Implementation Support Specialist), Emily Zitek (Consultant Biostatistician), Joshua Rumbut (Software Engineer).

Shannon Community Safety Initiative (CSI) FY24 Local Action Research Partnership (LARP)

In partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Shannon CSI-LARP supports Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster in their youth and young adult gang prevention and intervention efforts by providing research, evaluation, training, and technical assistance. The project team is **Dr. Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator) and **Jinnia Baiye** (Implementation Support Specialist I).

Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP): Diversion to Care

In partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Department of Public Health, and the Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court, COSSUP Diversion to Care strengthens community-based overdose response and prevention strategies along intercept points in the criminal-legal, specifically for persons of color.

Family Treatment Court: Implementation Support

In partnership with the Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court, Family Treatment Court: Implementation Support designs and deploys the data infrastructure for Family Treatment Courts, provides training and resources to court staff, and supports Family Treatment Courts in the development of quality assurance and improvement activities. Family Treatment Courts provide early assessment, rapid access to treatment and support, and on-going care coordination to adults with open care and protection cases and substance use disorder. The project team is **Dr. Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator), **Dr. Michelle Crist** (Co-Investigator), **Jinnia Baiye** (Implementation Support Specialist), **Emily Zitek** (Consultant Biostatistician), **Joshua Rumbut** (Software Engineer).

Improving Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice in Parole — Use of Risk/Needs Assessment in Decisions



In this project funded by the Massachusetts Parole Board, **Dr. Gina Vincent** and the Law & Psychiatry Program team (**Dr. Spencer Lawson** (Co-I), **Dr. Ira Packer** (Co-I), **Kayla Carew**, and **Amy Thornton**) are providing consultation and implementation support to evaluate and improve the use of evidence-based practices (i.e., risk assessment, risk-need-responsivity, case planning) in parole practices. During FY24, the team conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of the current use of evidence-based practices for the parole board. The team made procedural and training recommendations. The team will work collaboratively with the MA Parole Board in FY25 to implement the recommendations the agency decides to adopt.

Assessing Delays in Parole Release

In this collaborative project between the Massachusetts Parole Board and the Massachusetts Department of Correction, **Dr. Gina Vincent** and the Law & Psychiatry Program team (**Dr. Spencer Lawson** (Co-I), **Dr. Ira Packer** (Co-I), and **Kayla Carew**) were enlisted by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) to evaluate and provide implementation support to reduce delays in the release of incarcerated persons from custody following a parole release decision. During FY24, the team worked with the Department of Correction and Parole Board to develop the data gathering procedures for this project. They also interviewed multiple parole staff to document the most likely barriers to release on parole.

Regarding Dangerousness: A Model for Reform and Improvement

Drs. Gina Vincent and Ira Packer of the Law & Psychiatry Program, along with violence risk experts from Protect International (Drs. Steve Hart and Kelly Watt) provided consultation and training to the Massachusetts Probation Service for identifying defendants' violence risk factors prior to sentencing. The team developed a set of structured professional guidelines to assist probation officers in making recommendations to the courts for conditions that would mitigate and treat defendants' violence risk; the Brief Risk Assessment for Violent Offending, Massachusetts Version (BRAVO-M). The team worked with the Probation Services Office of the Commissioner, Suffolk Superior Court, and Superior Court judges and attorneys to (1) train Suffolk probation officers in the BRAVO-M, (2) pilot test the feasibility of its use by probation officers when providing recommendations to the court, and (3) package a video training to implement and sustain BRAVO-M practices throughout the Massachusetts Probation Service.

Implementing Effective Screening & Assessment Practices in Youth Pre-Arrest Diversion

Dr. Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program team (Dr. Thomas Grisso and Kayla Carew) have been working with the MA Office of the Child Advocate and the Department of Youth Services for the past three years to develop, implement, and sustain evidence-based screening and assessment practices for the Youth Diversion Lab in Massachusetts. The Office of the Child Advocate designed and funded this pre-arrest diversion practice so youth who do not need high levels of intervention to prevent further delinquency could avoid formal involvement with the juvenile justice system. The MA Department of Youth Services started administering the Diversion Lab and with three provider sites in FY22. With support of the Office of the Child Advocate, the program has expanded to six provider sites around the state and counting. The Law and Psychiatry Program team assisted the agencies with the design of their behavioral health screening, risk/needs for reoffending assessment, and case planning protocols. In FY24, the Law & Psychiatry team provided training for new diversion screeners at new provider agencies on the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-Version 2 (MAYSI-2), the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) and its screening version, and case planning. In addition, the Law & Psychiatry team trained local master trainers on the YLS/CMI and case plan trainings to sustain quality practices throughout the life of the diversion lab and provided reviews and staff coaching on case plans.

Effective Risk Reduction Strategies for Youth and Young Adults with Serious Mental Illness

Starting in April 2023, Dr. Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program and iSPARC team (Dr. Maryann Davis, Rachael Perrault, Morgan Rao, and Kayla Carew) initiated

an Environmental Scan of effective youth and young adult early violence intervention programs and practices for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Child, Youth and Family Services. This work is funded by SAMHSA as a part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. The team worked closely with Dr. Kelly English, Deputy Commissioner Child Youth & Family Services, and Omar Irizarry, DMH Director of Cross Agency Initiatives. In FY24, the team made recommendations to DMH after completing a comprehensive environmental scan to 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. The Scan involved facilitating an inter-agency meeting of all child and young adult serving agencies in Massachusetts, a literature review and inventory of 379 scholarly works, and 58 interviews with various Massachusetts and provider agency staff. The team intensely reviewed 63 potential interventions and provided a full report and set of recommendations to DMH about potential programming to implement in Massachusetts.

Building Equity in Objective Prison Classification: A Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities



In this four-year project funded by the National Institute of Justice through the W.E.B. Du Bois Program of Research on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Justice System, **Drs. Spencer Lawson** and **Gina Vincent** of the Law & Psychiatry Program are collaborating with the MA Department of Correction to (1) examine the magnitude and drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in their Objective Point Base Classification System, (2) facilitate adjustments to their classification system to reduce observed tool bias and disparities, and (3) pilot the adjustments to evaluate their differential (or equitable) impact on custody level placements and access to programming. In FY24, the team convened a Steering Committee of MA Department of Correction and MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security partners, along with a National Institute of Corrections Prison Division representative and national expert in objective prison classification. The Law & Psychiatry Program convened a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Board of scholars and individuals with MA criminal-legal involvement to advise and be responsible for promoting practices to further the spirit of DEI in this project. The team met with MA Department of Correction classification boards and observed initial classification and reclassification hearings, and subsequent reviews at four MA Department of Correction institutions. The Law & Psychiatry Program provided a presentation about the project to the DMH Leadership Meeting.

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 **Dr. Megan Kelly**, Director of iSPARC, and **Dr. Stephenie Lemon**, Chief of the Division of Preventive Medicine within the UMass Chan Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences (PQHS).

In FY24, 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 82](#) for additional information about the iSPARC Grant Support Team). This enhanced environment resulted in the submission of 29 grants and contracts across FY24 in which iSPARC faculty were Principal Investigators (PI), site PI's, or Co-Investigators, an increase from the 21 grants and contracts submitted in FY23.

Five new faculty members joined iSPARC this year — **Lourah Kelly, PhD**, **Shaobing Su, PhD**, **Spencer Lawson, PhD**, **Michelle Mullen, PhD**, and **Michelle Crist, PhD**. Additionally, we successfully recruited a new postdoctoral fellow, **Xihan Yang, PhD**. Dr. Yang joined iSPARC's Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCD) Lab, where she will be working with **Dr. Su** in June 2024. In FY25, Dr. Yang will present her research program 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 benefitted from an

increased capacity for the Grant Support Team. These improvements, developed by iSPARC faculty as a group, provided a larger group with diverse expertise whose time is supported for this activity. This program has been widely praised by iSPARC faculty and trainees, leading to successes on several critical grant applications.

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. FY25 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 July 2023, **Michelle Mullen, PhD** was appointed Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.
- In December 2023, **Lourah Kelly, PhD** was promoted to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry with a secondary appointment in the Department of Emergency Medicine.
- In December 2023, **Shaobing Su, PhD** was appointed Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.
- In March 2024, **Spencer Lawson, PhD** was promoted to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.
- In March 2024, **Michelle Crist, PhD** was promoted to Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry.



New iSPARC Faculty

In FY24, iSPARC welcomed 5 new faculty members and a new postdoctoral fellow to the Center:



Michelle G. Mullen, PhD, CRC, CPRP, earned a faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School in July 2023. **Dr. Mullen** joined iSPARC in 2018 as a Senior Project Director while obtaining her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy & Practice. She is the developer of [Helping Youth on the Path to Employment](#)  (HYPE), and PI of the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) funded [Helping Youth on the Path to Employment \(HYPE\): Creating Economic Self-Sufficiency](#) . She is co-PI with **Dr. Maryann Davis** of the [Focused Skills and Strategy Training to Support Employment of Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions](#)  (FSST at Work) that is part of the NIDILRR funded Learning & Working RRTC. She is a co-I on two additional NIDILRR funded projects, Developing Implementation and Fidelity Monitoring Tools for the Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) Program (PI **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**) and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Health and Function of People with Psychiatric Disabilities (PI **Dr. Judith Cook**). Prior to joining iSPARC, **Dr. Mullen** was an Assistant Professor for the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions at Rutgers University and the Director of CSPR. She received her master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling with a specialization in Psychiatric Rehabilitation from Boston University. **Dr. Mullen** has led multiple research and development projects evaluating the effectiveness of various interventions for college students with psychiatric conditions. Her current interests and studies focus on standardizing services supporting college students with mental health conditions (e.g. Supported Education); evaluating the effectiveness of various educational supports; testing a cognitive remediation intervention for college students; and evaluating the services that are effective for young people to develop meaningful, long-term careers.



Lourah Kelly, PhD, joined iSPARC as an Investigator in the Department of Psychiatry in July 2023. In December 2023, she was promoted to Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry with a secondary appointment in the Department of Emergency Medicine. She completed her BA in Psychology at George Mason University and her MA and PhD 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 (1) [*Collaborative Hub for Emerging Adult Recovery Research*](#) [↗](#) (CHEARR) (PI Kristyn Zajac, PhD, Assistant Professor Department of Medicine at UConn Health) and (2) [*Improving Outcomes of Adolescents in Residential Substance use Treatment via a Technology-Assisted Parenting Intervention*](#) [↗](#) (Sara Becker, PhD, Alice Hamilton Professor of Psychiatry in the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine). Dr. Kelly is the Faculty Core Lead for Dissemination and Community Engagement of the National Institute of Mental Health-funded [*Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide through Technology Translation*](#) [↗](#) (MPIs Edwin Boudreaux, PhD and Catarina Kiefe, PhD, MD).



Shaobing Su, PhD, joined iSPARC in December 2023 as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry. Dr. Su's doctoral and postdoctoral training encompassed 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.



Spencer Lawson, PhD, earned a faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School in March 2024. He started as a Senior Research Scientist in the Law & Psychiatry Program and in iSPARC in October 2022, immediately following completion of his PhD in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University. In his community-based research, he works directly with criminal justice practitioners and individuals with criminal-legal

involvement to address social problems through the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based approaches. He has been working with **Dr. Gina Vincent** on (1) a MacArthur Foundation funded project to examine racial/ethnic and mental health disparities in legal settings, which involves a series of different research projects, and (2) two contracts to implement evidence-based practices with the Massachusetts Parole Board. **Dr. Lawson** received his first grant, the W.E.B. Du Bois Early Investigator's grant from the National Institute of Justice — a four-year research project to examine racial and ethnic disparities and build equity in objective prison classification with the MA Department of Correction. He is Co-PI with **Dr. Gina Vincent** on a research project funded by NIDILRR to [improve service accessibility for justice-involved transition age youth with serious mental health conditions](#) and currently is in the process of securing a state contract to offer research and implementation support for the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction. He is well-published, has experience with sophisticated quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and is invested in a career that will study and prevent behavioral health conditions among people across multiple points in the criminal-legal system.



Michelle Crist, PhD, earned a faculty appointment as an Instructor of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School in March 2024. She joined iSPARC in early 2022 as a postdoctoral fellow in the MA Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts. **Dr. Crist** is a Sociologist and Level 1 Certified Implementation Support Specialist. She currently supports implementation, assessment, case management, and treatment for persons involved in the Massachusetts criminal-legal system who are at an elevated likelihood of continued criminal-legal system involvement. **Dr. Crist** also leads a work group on an initiative that re-imagines the state's Community Service Program to bolster client strengths within the context of the risk-need-responsivity model. She is also leading an initiative to establish a Support Center Community Advisory Board to give voice to the experiences of justice-involved persons. **Dr. Crist** previously graduated from UMass Boston's PhD program in Sociology where her research focused on the intersection of policing and behavioral health, specifically the role of law enforcement officers in the opioid epidemic.

New iSPARC Postdoctoral Fellow



In June 2024, **Xi Han Yang, PhD**, joined iSPARC as a new postdoctoral fellow in the Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCD) Lab, where she will be working with **Dr. Shaobing Su**. **Dr. Yang** brings a wealth of experience from her role as a Project Coordinator at the Crehan Lab at Tufts University, where she worked on the Key Intimate Social Skills (KISS) project. This involved testing lab-based clinical measures among autistic and non-autistic adults. Her master's thesis explored the perspectives of Chinese American parents with autistic children regarding their educational needs and experiences, particularly their

attitudes towards culturally sensitive education. With guidance from Dr. Eileen Crehan and support from an Organization for Autism Research (OAR) grant, **Dr. Yang** also led a longitudinal training project that compared the effects of a sex education program delivered in group versus individual sessions among autistic adolescents. For her dissertation research, **Dr. Yang** collected original data and developed a new measure to assess the levels of cultural relevance and responsiveness of sexuality and relationship education from various providers. During her postdoctoral training, **Dr. Yang** will collaborate with **Dr. Su** on her NIH R00 mixed-methods project focusing on parent-child separation and child mental health among low-income Chinese immigrant families. She will also support **Dr. Su's** mentoring practices for student research assistants at the lab. To pursue her independent career, **Dr. Yang** will propose new research with both autistic and non-autistic children from immigrant families. She aims to continue her focus on underserved autistic groups and communities, exploring their educational needs and experiences. Her career goal is to conduct research to understand the intersectional effects of culture and neurodiversity to serve and protect minority populations.

iSPARC Research Centers and Programs

ACT Research Program



The ACT Research Program is focused on applications of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to improve the lives of people with mental health conditions. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is an acceptance, mindfulness, and values-based approach to help people with mental health conditions improve their quality of life and overall life functioning. The ACT Research Program is led by **Dr. Megan Kelly**.

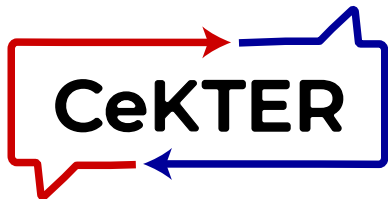
The ACT Research Program is currently working on the development and evaluation of ACT tobacco cessation approaches for people with mental health conditions and the use of ACT to improve the social support and community reintegration of people with mental health conditions and histories of trauma. This work focuses on both traditional psychotherapy and digital interventions to increase access to treatment. The ACT Research Program includes research that spans the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and UMass Chan Medical School.

Highlights in FY24:

- In December 2023, the ACT for PTSD and Tobacco Addiction manual, which was developed from two VA-funded grants, was nationally disseminated across the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs by the Office of Tobacco & Health: Policy and Programs. This manual focuses on targeting both PTSD and tobacco use concurrently for veterans with PTSD. The ACT for PTSD and Tobacco Addiction manual is now a clinical resource for tobacco treatment specialists across the Veterans Health Administration and included on the Office of Tobacco & Health: Policy and Programs SharePoint.

- In November 2023, **Dr. Kelly** provided an all-day workshop at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) for clinicians and researchers on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Cravings and Addictions, based on an approach that she developed with Dr. Maria Karekla from the University of Cyprus.
- In September 2023, **Dr. Kelly** obtained funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-funded [The Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration](#) [↗](#) (CIRC Center) to develop and evaluate Flexible Living and Optimal Wellness (FLOW). Flexible Living and Optimal Wellness (FLOW) is an identity-affirming adaptation of ACT for young adults with serious mental health conditions who identify as LGBTQIA+ to increase their social connectedness with family members, partners, friends, peers and increase social integration in the community.
- In March 2024, **Dr. Kelly** obtained a Bresciani Travel Award from the Department of Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School with her mentees, **Dr. Brian Stevenson** and Dr. Victoria Ameral, for their accepted panel discussion at the American Psychological Association Convention, “*Redefining the Target for Mental Health: Psychotherapeutic Approaches that Focus on Life Functioning.*” This panel discussion focused on a discussion of psychotherapeutic approaches to improving functional targets (e.g., social connectedness, occupational functioning, values-based living), instead of symptom reduction as the primary outcome.
- In March 2024, **Dr. Kelly** finished recruitment for her VA-funded efficacy trial of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Improve Social Support for veterans with PTSD. This project is a multi-site trial of the ACT to Improve Social Support approach, being carried out at VA Bedford, VA Rocky Mountain, and VA Connecticut Healthcare Systems.

Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (CeKTER)



The Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research or CeKTER (pronounced “sector”) is led by Co-Directors Dr. Marianne Farkas, ScD (Director of Training, Dissemination, and Technical Assistance, Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation) and **Dr. Marsha Ellison**. In addition to **Dr. Ellison**, the iSPARC CeKTER team consists of **Dee Logan**, **Jean Wnuk**, **Debbie Nicoellis**, **Morgan Rao**, and **Colleen McKay**. [CeKTER](#) [↗](#) is a collaborative effort between Boston University and UMass Chan that aims to promote the use of employment research findings and research-based products by people with disabilities, employers, employment service providers, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and policymakers among

others. CeKTER's overall goal is to assist National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)-funded disability employment grantees with sharing their work that will improve services, approaches, practices, and policies that support improved outcomes for people with disabilities.

Highlights in FY24:

- Published the first in a series of summaries of findings from a systematic scoping review looking at NIDILRR-funded disability employment research in the 21st century, [Demographics and Employment Outcomes: Selected Findings from NIDILRR-funded Disability Employment Research in the 21st Century](#) [!\[\]\(633dd45d48d71eb51a85c6dd83ee51e9_img.jpg\)](#).
- Building off learnings from our very successful “S.M.A.R.T. Social Media for Employment Research Dissemination” Community of Practice (CoP), we published the tip sheet, [Building a Community of Practice to Improve Dissemination of Disability Research](#) [!\[\]\(bdddf9191a284aa0945448444083c5b0_img.jpg\)](#) that offers others guidance on how to develop and sustain a successful Community of Practice.
- In May 2024, we launched our new Community of Practice, “Effectiveness in Training,” featuring **Debbie Nicoellis**, Training Director at the UMass Chan Medical School's Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research. Over a dozen NIDILRR disability research employment grantees expressed interest in joining. At our first meeting in May we had five attendees representing four organizations and at our June meeting, we had nine attendees representing six different organizations.
- Hosted the webinar [A Framework for Investigating Living and Working with Disabilities and Long COVID Webinar](#) [!\[\]\(944943bcf87a12c5b9337bf7ed1ef546_img.jpg\)](#), featuring Dr. Vidya Sundar, Dr. Debra Brucker and Shreya Paul from the University of New Hampshire (UNH). They are investigating the impact of Long COVID on the lived experiences of people with disabilities in terms of healthcare utilization and employment.
- CeKTER Co-Directors, **Drs. Marsha Ellison** and Marianne Farkas, were chosen to present at the Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research's November 2023 Virtual Knowledge Translation Conference — “Tailoring Your Knowledge Translation Strategies for Your Intended Users.” Their presentation, [Advances in Knowledge Translation: Principles and Practices](#) [!\[\]\(77e1e368d53d3ed6ec2a15bf2432e026_img.jpg\)](#), discussed the background principles and activities of CeKTER and some findings from CeKTER's comparative effectiveness study to determine the relative reach of differing knowledge dissemination approaches for providers of employment services to people with disabilities and disability employment policymakers.

DeafYES! Center for Deaf Empowerment and Recovery



Co-directed by Drs. **Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins**, the mission of DeafYES is to partner with the Deaf community to develop innovative addiction and mental health resources that are uniquely and expertly tailored for Deaf signing people. DeafYES provides culturally-affirmative, linguistically-accessible psychotherapy to Deaf clients, while their NIAAA-, NCATS-, and NIDCD-funded programs of research revolve around developing innovative, evidence-based behavioral health interventions and research methodologies.




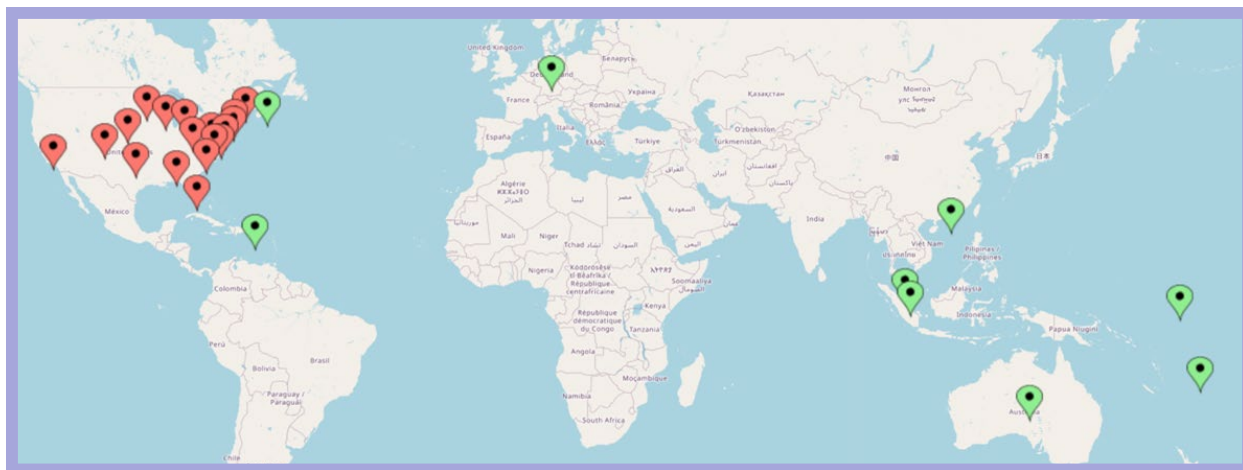
Highlights in FY24:



➤ In September 2023, **Dr. Melissa Anderson** was awarded a 3.6-million-dollar grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to conduct the first-ever full-scale psychotherapy clinical trial in the Deaf community. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

➤ **Dr. Alexander Wilkins** and his Deaf-engaged intervention development team are in the process of adapting Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) to be more accessible for Deaf American Sign Language (ASL) users. In FY24, the team successfully: (1) developed specific ASL vocabulary for all Motivational Interviewing/MET concepts; (2) adapted the overall structure of the MET intervention for Deaf ASL users; and (3) completed adaptation of two intervention tools to be used during MET sessions.

- In January 2024, the DeafYES team released a new training film to teach healthcare providers how to better interact with a diverse group of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing patients. The film, [Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients](#) , is publicly available on the DeafYES YouTube page, where it has received more than 11,000 views in the six months since its release.
- On January 11, 2024, DeafYES hosted a virtual film premiere and panel discussion to release the Vital Signs film to the public for the first time. They co-hosted this Zoom webinar event with DEAF, Inc., a Massachusetts-based human service agency for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing consumers. The premiere attracted 264 attendees who represented 19 U.S. states and 8 foreign countries.



- Across FY24, the DeafYES team competed in the [NIH Build UP Trust Challenge](#), which solicited innovative approaches to increase research participation and the adoption of medical care by building trust and improving engagement with historically underserved communities. DeafYES proposed to disseminate their Vital Signs film via a series of community outreach events, for which they will partner Deaf community agencies with local academic medical centers to build new collaborations and begin to rectify mistrust. Of more than 200 proposals, DeafYES scored in the top 20, receiving an Honorable Mention and qualifying their team as Challenge finalists. Their team now has one year to strengthen, implement, and test their trust-building solution. They will present their results to NIH at a live demonstration day in Bethesda, MD in November 2025, where NIH will select four Challenge winners to each receive a \$200,000 prize.

EmpowerWork Research Program



Directed by **Dr. Brian Stevenson**, the EmpowerWork program is comprised of a team of clinical psychologists, psychology trainees, and health science specialists who are affiliated with UMass Chan Medical School and the VA Bedford Healthcare System. The EmpowerWork program aims to improve the employment outcomes of veterans living with addictions and co-occurring conditions through meaningful employment goals, self-efficacy, and empowerment. Since its establishment in 2018, the

EmpowerWork program has provided direct vocational rehabilitation services to over 300 veterans with mental health/substance use conditions and has received over 1.3 million dollars in VA research funding to develop, test, and improve vocational services for veterans.

Highlights in FY24:

- In July 2023, **Dr. Stevenson** was awarded the Early Career Professional Award by the Society for Vocational Psychology, a section of the Division of Counseling Psychology and the American Psychological Association in recognition of his scholarly contributions to vocational psychology.

- In September 2023, the EmpowerWork team completed a VA-funded, two-year clinical demonstration project to evaluate and implement a job loss intervention program (Supported Employment: Engage & KEEP [SEEK]) at VA Bedford, VA Cheyenne, and VA Hines (Chicago). Our team demonstrated feasibility and acceptability of the SEEK intervention, as well as preliminary outcomes pertaining to employment functioning. We presented our results to national VA vocational leadership (over 200 attendees across the United States) and SEEK is being written into national VA directives as recommended job loss prevention programming across more than 160 vocational rehabilitation sites.
- In May 2024, **Dr. Stevenson** was chosen as a fellow for the 24th National Institute of Health (NIH) Summer Institute for Randomized Trials of Behavioral Interventions. The institute is sponsored by NIH and provides advanced training in planning, designing, and conducting high-impact randomized controlled trials of health-related behavioral interventions. The program emphasizes programmatic research and prepares fellows to lead or collaborate on systematic efforts to develop and improve health-related behavioral interventions and conduct rigorous, high-impact behavioral trials.
- As of July 2024, the EmpowerWork team has recruited 50% of our target sample for a randomized controlled trial to test Purposeful Pathways, a manualized and integrative psychotherapeutic intervention developed by **Dr. Stevenson** to support veterans with co-occurring conditions in aspiring and pursuing meaningful employment.

Family Resilience and Child Development Lab



The Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCD) lab, led by **Dr. Shaobing Su**, focuses on developmental research with vulnerable and underserved children affected by various forms of family separation, especially those related to parental migration and immigration. The lab's mission is to understand and address health disparities related to family separation in various contexts. Currently, the FRCD lab is conducting a mixed-methods, community-based participatory research project to investigate child mental health and related factors among separated-reunited parent-child dyads within the Chinese immigrant community. Looking ahead, the lab aims to broaden its research to include interdisciplinary research with other populations who have experienced family separation, such as diverse immigrant groups, refugees, and children in foster care.

Highlights in FY24:

- **Dr. Su** is PI of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)-funded R00, *Effects of Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Understanding Mental Health among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Children*. This grant supports mixed-methods community-based participatory research about early and prolonged parent-child separation and child mental health among separated-reunited Chinese immigrant families. Based on research data collected from families

affected by parent-child separation, the FRCD team published two peer-reviewed journal papers in FY24. These findings provided evidence for a recent R21 submission to NIMHD which aims to adapt a family strengthening intervention for separated-reunited families. The grant proposal was led by Dr. Su (PI) and Dr. Cixin Wang (co-PI)s, Associate Professor of School Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. The FRCD team presented their work based on Dr. Su's K99 project at four academic conferences, including Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA), Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD), American Psychological Association, and International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (ISSBD).



- Dr. Su and her postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Xihan Yang, provided hands-on mentorship to a group of undergraduate and graduate research interns on data analysis and manuscript writing. Through weekly meetings in the Spring and Summer of 2024, the team has completed six full manuscripts, three of which are currently under review.
- Dr. Su is Co-PI with Dr. Rong Bai (PI), Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work at East Carolina University, on the Small Grants Program for Early Career Scholars from Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) funded project, *Navigating Parenthood: Exploring Parenting Strategies among Youth Aging out of Foster Care*.

Interdepartmental Research

Although most of iSPARC's faculty have their primary appointments within the Department of Psychiatry, several iSPARC faculty collaborate with us from other departments, particularly the Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences and the Department of Emergency Medicine. Below please find several highlights from the work of these faculty members.

Highlights in FY24:



Dr. Stephenie Lemon received a new five-year award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to fund the Prevention Research Center at UMass Chan. This is the fourth competitive five-year cycle. The PRC provides infrastructure to support community engaged implementation science focused on promoting health equity for chronic disease prevention and control in Worcester, MA and an applied research project testing an implementation strategy to build community member and public health agency capacity to support built environment changes that promote physical activity and numerous co-benefits in 8 low-income Worcester neighborhoods.



Dr. Rajani Sadasivam's digital health research is primarily focused on treating tobacco use (e.g., cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use), the number one preventable cause of death. A major challenge is that tobacco-related disparities have expanded, with disadvantaged groups disproportionately suffering from tobacco use (e.g., low-income, minorities, and people with mental health conditions). **Dr. Sadasivam** currently leads several large, funded studies. These include the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded *Adapt2Quit — A Machine-Learning, Adaptive Motivational System: RCT for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Smokers*, which tests a motivational texting system aimed at socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals in the United States. He is MPI with Dr. Hoa Nguyen on the National Cancer Institute (NCI) funded *mHealth Messaging to Motivate Quitline use and Quitting among Persons Living With HIV in Vietnam* in which he has adapted and is testing this system with people living with HIV who smoke in Vietnam. The NCI funded *Using Rural Community Paramedicine to Engage Lower-Motivated Smokers: Spreading an Effective mHealth-Assisted Intervention to Motivate Cessation* is a **hybrid Type 2 effectiveness study** where **Dr. Sadasivam** is testing both an implementation strategy and the effectiveness of an intervention tailored to individuals who smoke but are not yet ready to quit, particularly those living in rural Appalachia. In addition to tobacco cessation, **Dr. Sadasivam** and Dr. Judith Ockene are conducting research on using technology to teach weight management counseling to medical residents (*MRWeight: Medical Residents Learning Weight Management Counseling Skills — A Multi-Modal, Technology-Assisted, Spaced Education Program*, NIH).



The Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide through Technology Translation (CAPEs) is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health as one of its Practice-Based Suicide Prevention Research Centers. CAPEs's

mission is to save lives by accelerating the implementation of evidence-based suicide care in healthcare settings. Their multi-disciplinary faculty members draw on the fields of implementation science, person-centered design, hybrid clinical trial design, economics, business development, and ethics to maximize the scientific and public health impact of the Center. The Center is in its second year and is co-Directed by Drs. Ed Boudreaux and Catarina Kiefe. During FY24, Dr. Lourah Kelly joined CAPEs as the new Dissemination and Community Engagement (DanCE) Unit Lead. Her responsibilities include building and engaging community member panels and healthcare system consortium to maximize their potential for synergy across the Center's projects and executing the Center's dissemination plan, including developing direct-to-community materials with the CAPEs Lived Experience Community Board. Drs. Rachel Davis-Martin and Lourah

Kelly also led two DMH-sponsored trainings entitled, "Assessing & Managing Suicide Risk: Core Competencies for Outpatient Health and Behavioral Health Professionals." In early 2024, the CAPEs team launched the *Jaspr: Testing and Implementing a Tablet-based Intervention to Support Patients with Suicidal Thoughts or Attempts in Emergency Departments* study to evaluate [Jaspr Health's](#) patient-facing tablet-based application during suicide-related emergency department visits. The Center launched its [website](#) which includes updates on CAPEs projects, connections with other faculty, and resources for researchers, clinicians and healthcare organizations, digital health specialists, and persons impacted by suicide and suicidal thoughts; iSPARC's Graphic Designer, Jonathan Lerew is the primary website developer and responsible for its maintenance. The Center published its first tip sheet, [Best Practices for Dissemination of Suicide Research](#), written by Dr. Celine Larkin and the DanCE Unit including Dr. Lourah Kelly.



Dr. Bo Wang contributed to data analysis for Dr. Maryann Davis's [Peer Academic Supports for College Students with Serious Mental Health Conditions](#) (PASS 2.0) and Dr. Melissa Anderson's [Sign Here: How to Conduct Informed Consent with Deaf Individuals](#) projects. He is leading five projects in The Bahamas, Thailand, and Zambia. Two of these projects were funded in FY24, (1) National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded Adapting mHealth Interventions to Improve Self-Management of HIV and Substance Use Among Emerging Adults in Zambia (MPI Dr. Karen MacDonell); and (2) National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) funded Conquering Hypertension in Urban Vietnam (MPI Dr. Hoa T. Nguyen). Descriptions of these projects can be found in [Appendix A](#). Dr. Wang has two grant submissions under review and three submissions in preparation.




Law & Psychiatry Research Program



The Research arm of the Law & Psychiatry Program is directed by **Dr. Gina Vincent** with considerable support from its investigators—**Drs. Spencer Lawson** (Assistant Professor), **Ira Packer** (Professor Emeritus), and **Thomas Grisso** (Professor Emeritus)—, **Amy Thornton** (Program Manager), and our team of research coordinators—**Karlie Rice**, **Jennifer Pendleton**, **Kayla Carew**, and **Morgan Rao**. Our mission is to assist systems in their implementation of evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for legally involved youth and adults through research, policy, and training.



Highlights in FY24:

- In September 2023, **Dr. Lawson** was named a W.E.B. Du Bois Fellow and received a \$600,000 grant, along with **Dr. Vincent**, Co-I, from the National Institute of Justice to collaborate with the MA Department of Correction on assessing racial and ethnic disparities within their objective prison classification system. [UMass Chan Medical School](#) , the [Worcester Business Journal](#) , and the [National Institute of Corrections](#)  posted feature articles about the project.
- Across FY24, **Drs. Vincent** and **Ira Packer**, and experts from Protect International worked with the Massachusetts Probation Services (MPS) Office of the Commissioner to develop a set of structured professional guidelines for assisting MA probation officers with making informed mitigation recommendations for sentencing—the Brief Risk Assessment for Violent Offending, Massachusetts Version (BRAVO-M). The Law & Psychiatry investigators trained Suffolk Superior Court probation in conducting the BRAVO-M with defendants, assisted the court with piloting it, and produced a video and curriculum for statewide training.
- Across FY24, **Drs. Vincent** and **Lawson**, and **Karlie Rice**, with assistance from **Jennifer Pendleton** and **Kayla Carew**, worked with the Colorado Division of Youth Services and eight of their districts to develop and validate a novel pretrial detention tool for youth. This is the first pretrial tool to identify youth charged with a new offense who are at highest risk of serious harm to others (violence) instead of simply committing any new offense. The Colorado advisory board voted to implement this tool statewide, which will decrease the proportion of youth sent to pretrial detention and racial disparities.

- In January 2024, Drs. Vincent and Maryann Davis and the Law & Psychiatry team (Rachael Perrault, Jessica Rao (consultant), Kayla Carew, and Morgan Rao) provided recommendations to the MA Department of Mental Health Child, Youth and Family Services for programs to adopt in Massachusetts with the greatest likelihood of reducing violence among youth and young adults. They generated these recommendations by completing a comprehensive environmental scan and facilitating a collaborative effort across 13 state agencies.
- Across FY24, Dr. Lawson, Emma Narkewicz, and Dr. Vincent conducted a systematic review of the real-world impact of risk instruments on racial/ethnic disparities in legal decision making. They found proper use of risk tools has been more likely to reduce racial disparities in legal settings than to exacerbate them. This work will be disseminated via publication in Law and Human Behavior and a podcast.


Lifeline for Families




The Lifeline for Families Center at UMass Chan Medical School develops and scales interventions that support parents, children, and their relationship to each other. We lead national projects that focus on increasing access to parent and child mental healthcare with a trauma-responsive and relational health lens. Lifeline for Families was developed through multidisciplinary collaboration between psychiatry, obstetrics/gynecology, psychology/behavioral health, and pediatrics to break down silos and unite our fields. Our aim is to mitigate morbidity and mortality caused by negative mental health outcomes and to promote healing among families and communities that have been marginalized and stigmatized. Despite growing attention to our nation's mental health crisis, lack of access persists and maternal and child deaths due to mental health disorders continue to rise. In response, we have increased capacity in traditional and nontraditional settings to promote the mental health of families. In close collaboration with community partners, we develop, implement, and test scalable and sustainable interventions that increase equitable access to and engagement with evidence-based mental health care for families. A critical feature of our work is investing in and training the next generation of clinicians, researchers, educators, and policy makers through mentorship and sponsorship, and most recently through the launch of our Fellowship in Early Relational Health. Lifeline for Families is led by Executive Director Dr. Nancy Byatt and Associate Director Dr. Jessica Griffin.

Highlights in FY24:

- In dual partnership with Postpartum Support International, one of our longtime community collaborators, we were awarded a **\$21 million contract from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)** to conduct the national

[Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity](#)  (Pathways) study. Pathways was proposed in direct response to concerns expressed by our Individuals with Lived Expertise of Perinatal Mental Health Conditions Advisory Council about ongoing gaps and inequities in perinatal mental health care. In the Pathways study, we will compare a healthcare system-focused intervention, PProgram in Support of Moms (PRISM), to a healthcare system and community-level-focused intervention, Healthcare-Community Partnership, in 32 obstetric practices in seven states across the U.S. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

- As part of the Pathways study, we have conducted research designed to **improve the equity and external validity of cluster randomized controlled trials (RCTs)**. Typically, medical practices that participate in cluster RCTs are enrolled using ad hoc methods, often through investigators' professional networks. In the PCORI-funded Pathways study, we systematically identify practices that disproportionately serve structurally marginalized populations and then carefully document efforts to enroll them. Results will help to characterize the frequency with which practices meet inclusion criteria and have sufficient resources to participate. Data collection is ongoing.
- We **completed a qualitative study with community partners** to elucidate gaps and potential synergies among providers focusing on both children aged 0 to 3 and perinatal populations. We conducted in-depth interviews with individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges and trauma and those that serve them. We heard that while obstetric care ends at six weeks postpartum, mental health challenges often start or continue well past that. Participants voiced that we also need to support families through pediatric settings, including focusing on families at risk of child welfare involvement. Participants suggested focusing on parents seeking peer mentors who can provide individualized support in the settings in which they are the most comfortable. Participants felt that implementation of such support through pediatric settings could bolster parenting skills, mental health, and resilience, before more intensive mental health services are warranted.
- We **drafted a comprehensive evaluation plan for Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs**. To date, evaluation has been conducted through a combination of independent researchers and the Access Programs themselves, typically with little coordination. In response, the "Roadmap for Evaluation of Access Programs" will call for coordinated activities that make best use of all available data sources from Access Program databases to user surveys to external databases, such as claims and electronic medical record data.
- We have continued to **leverage our [Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs](#)** , of which there are 30 across the U.S., to disseminate our research on Access Programs across the country. We have published articles in prestigious journals, including *Lancet Public Health* and *Health Affairs*. Our work has been featured in major news media outlets.



➤ **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** is the PI of the Mentored Career Development (KL2) award *Developing a Scalable Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety in Obstetric Settings* study. Funded in July 2022, the goal of this study is to develop Reaching Calm, a multicomponent intervention to prevent perinatal anxiety disorders that includes (1) a digital intervention, (2) training for obstetric professionals, and (3) workflow integration protocol. During FY24, **Dr. Zimmermann** and her team completed participant recruitment, conducting think-aloud interviews with perinatal patients from the UMass Chan Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology clinic (n=15) who were experiencing elevated anxiety symptoms ($5 \leq \text{GAD-7} < 10$), and facing economic challenges. The study team held four meetings with an advisory council of individuals with lived experience of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders to further guide intervention refinement. They revised the digital intervention in response to feedback, which now includes SMS text messages, videos, interactive activities, and a website. Preliminary results of the interviews suggested high content acceptability and helped us identify areas for improvement. The study team are now developing a training for obstetric professionals and a workflow integration protocol. During FY24, **Dr. Zimmermann** worked on the resubmission of *Reaching Calm: A Digital Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety Disorder* to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).



➤ **Dr. Radley (Chris) Sheldrick** is the site PI for the newly funded Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Science of Engagement Award, *Increasing Research Partnership with Engagement Mapping: A Pilot Study to Advance Engagement Science*. This project is a collaboration with Dr. Thoams Mackie, (University of Massachusetts Amherst) and Dr. Karen Tabb Dina (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). The goal of this study is to advance the meaningful engagement of populations underrepresented in comparative effectiveness research (CER) mental health research studies that focuses on outcomes that patients and other healthcare stakeholders tell us are important (PCOR). The study team will:

1. conduct a scoping review of engagement methods for individuals underrepresented in research partnerships;
2. create a consensus-based guide to engagement methods through a modified Delphi Panel of external PCOR/CER mental health equity and engagement experts; and
3. conduct a pilot study to refine, implement and test the feasibility of Engagement Mapping with four Advisory Councils.

iSPARC's Young Adult Advisory Board, Family Advisory Board and the Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council will be involved in study activities. In addition, **Dr. Sheldrick** is a Co-Investigator as Director of Methods Core of the PCORI-funded *Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity* project (see [Appendix A](#) for more information).

The Program for Clubhouse Research



The Program for Clubhouse Research was established in 2000 to increase the quality and quantity of research on the Clubhouse Model of Psychosocial Rehabilitation. The Program for Clubhouse Research, directed by **Colleen McKay** coordinates, promotes, and conducts Clubhouse research projects that are congruent with Clubhouse philosophy. Additional activities include acting as a clearinghouse for Clubhouse research with the capacity to provide effective communication, information dissemination, and assistance to Clubhouses, researchers, and other stakeholders interested in Clubhouse-related research and research outcomes.

Highlights in FY24:

- **Colleen McKay** served as a guest editor for a special issue of the *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* on the Clubhouse Model. The special issue will be released this fall and has nine articles that add to the knowledge base through both qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the impact of the Clubhouse Model.
- **Colleen McKay** had meetings with representatives from SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), SAMHSA's Office of Intergovernmental and Public Affairs (OIPA), SAMHSA's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use (OAS), and SAMHSA's Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center (EBPRC), who were interested in learning more about research and outcomes associated with the Clubhouse Model.
- An annual survey of Mental Health Clubhouses — the Clubhouse Profile Questionnaire (CPQ) has moved to a web-based platform. This survey is administered annually to 350 Clubhouses in 33 countries that are affiliated with Clubhouse International. The new web-based tool was developed with input and feedback from Clubhouse members and staff that participate on Clubhouse International's data sub-committee.
 - In 2023, two hundred and fifty mental health Clubhouses used the new tool to complete CPQ's. A report with the survey findings has been created for Clubhouse International. Slides with findings will be posted on iSPARC's website.
 - A version of the web-based tool is being created for Clubhouses that serve individuals living with brain injuries in 2024.

Research to Optimize Women's Mental Health



Dr. Kimberly Yonkers is the Katz Family Chair in Psychiatry and departmental chair. For the past 20 years, she conducted pivotal research on women's mental health. Her work established serotonin reuptake inhibitors as the gold standard treatment for premenstrual dysphoric disorder and in a separate initiative, showed that mental health mood changes are present in pregnancy as well as the postpartum interval. Her team was one of the early groups to focus their research on the improvement of mental health among pregnant and postpartum individuals with addiction.

Highlights in FY24:

- **Dr. Yonkers** was named the chair of the Steering Committee for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5 (DSM-5). The Steering Committee considers and manages changes for DSM-5 including the addition of, elimination of, and criterion changes for mental health illness categories.
- **Dr. Yonkers** presented at 3 invited symposia at the American Psychiatric Association Meeting. The topics were: (1) Psychiatric Update on Reproductive Mood Disorders; (2) Rapid Acting Psychiatric Treatments; (3) The Future of DSM: A Comparison of the Categorical, Dimensional and Perspectives of Psychiatry Approaches.
- **Dr. Yonkers** consulted to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and guided the group in the development of treatment guidelines for Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).
- **Dr. Yonkers** began her second term as the inaugural Editor-In-Chief for the on-line APA journal, *Psychiatric Research and Clinical Practice*. The term began with a new Editorial Board and the journal is now indexed on Index Medicus and Medline.
- **Dr. Yonkers** and her lab started enrollment for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) *Development of a Text Intervention for Perinatal Depression* project that is a text messaging intervention to help pregnant individuals at risk of perinatal depression to develop resilience strategies that can potentially help them avoid an episode of depression; her lab continued recruitment for the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded *Scaling Up: A Multi-Site Trial of e-SBI for Alcohol Use in Pregnancy* project that aims to help pregnant individuals minimize or stop drinking in pregnancy.

Substance Use and Suicide Risk Lab



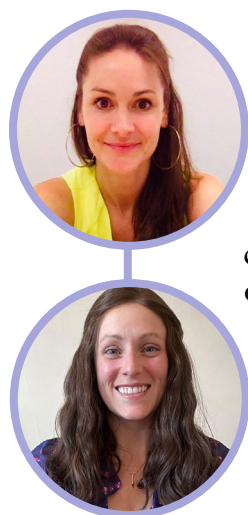
The Substance Use and Suicide lab is led by **Dr. Lourah Kelly**. Her lab focuses on co-design, dissemination, and implementation of evidence-based practices for substance use disorder and suicide risk, particularly among transition age youth. **Dr. Kelly's** research is funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Since joining iSPARC and UMass Chan Medical School in July 2024, **Dr. Kelly** has published 7 manuscripts (3 first author) in scientific journals (see [Appendix C](#)) and has presented or is scheduled to present 7 posters (3 first author, 4 which include trainees) at national conferences, in addition to features on the [S.T.A.Y Tuned](#) [🔗](#) podcast of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research within iSPARC and dissemination of research to broader communities through Twitter/X and LinkedIn.

Highlights in FY24:

- In September 2023, **Dr. Kelly** was awarded a \$747,000 K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award from the NIAAA to conduct pilot testing of the emerging adult avatar platform (EA-Avatar). EA-Avatar was designed in collaboration with emerging adults, clinical experts, emergency department experts, and iSPARC's Young Adult Advisory Board to support emerging adults with alcohol use problems and suicide risk after an emergency department visit. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).
- In April 2024, **Dr. Kelly** was awarded an R13 conference planning grant from NIAAA. This application received a perfect score from reviewers. The award supports up to 20 early career investigators (graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early faculty within 10 years of their degree) to attend the annual [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) [🔗](#) conference in person. All awardees present at a special poster session and attend a networking event, in addition to their regularly scheduled presentation. This R13 grant has been supporting early career investigators for the past 15 years and we are continuing to support the early career to independent investigator pipeline with researchers from under-represented backgrounds. The \$74,001 grant will support 20 travel awards to APA each year for 3 years. In August 2024, **Dr. Kelly** and her Clinical Research Coordinator awarded 15 travel awards to early career alcohol investigators and will host the event at APA August 8–10.
- **Dr. Kelly** became Unit Lead of the Dissemination and Community Engagement Unit of the Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide through Technology Translation (CAPES; MPIs: **Drs. Edwin Boudreaux** and Catarina Kiefe). This new role involves recruiting and hosting the first information session and holding monthly meetings to ensure the CAPES research projects and any products (e.g., tipsheets) are aligned with the needs of persons with lived experience with suicidal ideation and/or behavior. She also partnered with **Jonathan Lerew**, the iSPARC Graphic Designer, to create the [CAPES website](#) [🔗](#).

- **Dr. Kelly** is one of three faculty on the Consortium on Addiction Recovery Science Website and Conference Planning Committee, a NIDA-funded initiative to bring synergy across the R24 and R-series grants focused on recovery science. She is also Co-Investigator of the [Collaborative Hub of Emerging Adult Recovery Research](#) (CHEARR). In this role, she organized and executed the inaugural National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science, attended by over 350 participants from researchers, persons with lived experience and advisory board members, peer recovery support specialists, and community partners.
- **Dr. Kelly** is also a supervisor on an R37 Method to Extend Research in Time awarded to Dr. Sara Becker. In this capacity, **Dr. Kelly** moderates and responds to questions in a parent networking app for parents of adolescents in residential substance use treatment, trains and supervises parent coaches, and mentors students and trainees. This collaboration also resulted in two co-authored papers ([Becker, Schiller, ... & Kelly, L., 2024](#); [Becker, Janssen et al., 2024](#)) and national presentations at the Addiction Health Services Research conference.

The National Collaborative for Implementation Support Advancing Innovation, Evidence, and Equity in Justice, Health, and Community Settings



The National Collaborative for Implementation Support (NC-IS) aims to improve the lives and outcomes of people and communities through the adoption, implementation, sustainment, and scaling of innovative, evidence-based, and equitable interventions in justice, health, and community settings. Our vision is to become a national leader in change initiatives that build capacity of practitioners, organizations, communities and systems to effectively use interventions and improve outcomes. NC-IS's Executive Leadership Team, led by **Drs. Dara Drawbridge**, **Brian Daly**, and **Michelle Crist**, and **Amy Thornton**, is joined by 21 Project Co-Leaders and Team Members whose efforts drove tremendous work across seven projects in FY24 that support implementation in state agencies and communities.

Highlights in FY24:

- In December 2023, **Dr. Drawbridge** and **Jinnia Baiye** were awarded a contract to support Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster's youth and young adult prevention and intervention efforts in police departments and community-based programming. In March 2024, **Dr. Drawbridge**, **Meaghan Dupuis** (*forHealth*), **Mike Kane** (*forHealth*), and **Emma Narkewicz** were awarded a contract to support the MA Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Department of Public Health, and Executive Office of the MA Trial Court strengthen community-based overdose response and prevention strategies along intercept points in the criminal-legal, specifically for persons of color.

- In their work with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, **Drs. Michelle Crist** and **Dara Drawbridge** recruited 8 people with lived experience in the Massachusetts criminal-legal system to serve on a Community Justice Support Center Community Advisory Board that aims to become a resource to the criminal-legal system, Community Justice Support Centers, and communities across Massachusetts by raising awareness, providing advice, and promoting solutions to issues impacting people involved with the criminal-legal system.
- In FY24, the Massachusetts Center of Excellence for Specialty Courts and affiliated projects delivered 332 technical assistance activities to Massachusetts state and community-based agencies and brought training on best and evidence-based approaches to address intimate partner violence, commercial sexual exploitation, and mental health needs in the criminal-legal system to 429 training attendees from Massachusetts state and community-based agencies. These efforts were driven by **Drs. Drawbridge, Crist**, Brian Daly, and Ayorkor Gaba (Columbia University), Tara Dhanraj Roden (*forHealth*), Meaghan Dupuis (*forHealth*), Mike Kane (*forHealth*), **Amy Thornton**, **Jinnia Baiye**, **Elena Munzell**, **Charlie Clark**, **Janelle LaPlante**, Josh Rumbut (PQHS), Liz Orvek (PQHS), Chelsea Colageo, Alix Barry, Joseph Sawicki, Samantha Fagan, **Hanaan Osman**, and Emily Zitek.
- In their work with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections and Community Justice Support Centers, **Drs. Drawbridge** and **Crist**, **Charlie Clark**, **Elena Munzell**, and **Janelle LaPlante** trained 59 staff members on evidence based principles for risk assessment and management in the criminal-legal system, surveyed or interviewed 73 staff about barriers and facilitators to implementation of evidence-based risk management strategies, conducted 32 observations of cognitive-behavioral groups and 4 Center-specific inter-rater reliability exercises in the field, and designed and deployed 3 new tools to support staff in their implementation of risk management strategies.
- In their work to re-design Community Service in Massachusetts to bolster strengths in community, peer, and individual domains, **Drs. Crist** and **Drawbridge** surveyed 152 people court-ordered to Community Service in Massachusetts, 72 Community Service staff and community agency partners, and 171 Probation Officers about the goals of Community Service, their experiences with Community Service, and barriers and facilitators to accessing or utilizing the program.

The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research



Directed by **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**, the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research conducts research, training, and dissemination activities to improve outcomes among youth and young adults (ages 14 to 30) with serious mental health conditions. The Center includes the only two Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs) on transition age youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR): the [Learning and Working RRTC](#) [↗](#) and the [CIRC Center](#) [↗](#). The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research prioritizes community-engaged research by employing young adults with relevant lived experiences in various staff positions and by supporting a Young Adult Advisory Board and a Family Advisory Board.

Highlights in FY24:

- In September 2023, **Dr. Sabella** and Dr. Elizabeth Thomas at Temple University (co-PI), were awarded a new NIDILRR-funded **Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC)** aimed at improving the community participation outcomes of transition age youth with serious mental health conditions from backgrounds that have been marginalized or disadvantaged. **The CIRC Center will partner with youth to generate new knowledge regarding developmentally appropriate interventions and key systems and policy issues, and provide training, dissemination, and technical assistance activities to a variety of interested parties** (e.g., youth, family members, providers). Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).
- Representatives from NIDILRR and SAMHSA invited **Drs. Kathryn Sabella, Maryann Davis, Marsha Ellison, and Michelle Mullen** to present two national webinars. In February 2024, they virtually presented a webinar titled “Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for Transition Age Youth with Serious Mental Health Conditions” to more than **50 SAMHSA staff and grantees** from across the U.S. In March 2024, they presented a webinar titled “Research Findings to Inform Employment Policy and Practice for Transition Age Youth” to the **Federal Partners in Transition**, to representatives from several federal agencies including the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Labor.
- **Peer Academic Supports for Success (PASS) is an academic coaching program that supports college students with serious mental health conditions.** Student peer coaches help students strengthen their social support, resilience, self-determination and executive function skills to enhance their belief in their capacities to pursue a bachelor’s degree and maintain their motivation. **Dr. Davis** and colleagues developed PASS and established PASS’s efficacy through research at Boston University and UMass Boston. **In the 2023–2024 academic year, this team supported Rowan University in**

becoming the first university to implement PASS outside of a research trial. Rowan hired and trained 5 coaches who each served up to 3 students at a time. PASS will become widely available to colleges nationwide later this year.

- **Focused Skill and Strategy Training (FSST)**, an intervention featured in Dr. Michelle Mullen’s research portfolio, is a 12-session intervention aimed to develop self-regulation and goal directed behavior by strengthening executive functioning skills (e.g., organization, planning, time management, and memory). Previous research showed that college students receiving FSST were six times more likely to complete one more academic year than those who did not receive FSST. This year, two studies evaluated the feasibility and associated outcomes of FSST in two additional settings: a) implemented by MSW students in institutions of higher education; and b) being delivered digitally to young adults in work environments. **Results demonstrated the feasibility of FSST in these settings and that students who received FSST had more positive outcomes compared to those who did not receive FSST.** This promising intervention is one step closer to real-world implementation.
- Since 2020, with funding from NIDILRR, Dr. Sabella has partnered with the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health to develop and disseminate standardized implementation materials for the **bryt program**, a school-based program to support students returning from an extended absence due to SMHC and begun assessing its acceptability and effectiveness among students from marginalized backgrounds. This past year, the bryt team was awarded \$3 million dollars from the MA Department of Mental Health (via federal ARPA funds) and \$10 million from the Massachusetts Legislature (via the Behavioral Health Trust Fund). **These unparalleled investments will largely fund and support implementation of bryt within at least 30 additional schools across the Commonwealth, prioritizing high-needs school districts.**

Communications Program

The iSPARC Communications Program, led by Dr. Marsha Ellison with Dee Logan as the Deputy Program Director, was established as a distinct programmatic entity within iSPARC during FY24. The Communications Program is responsible for iSPARC social media, websites, written products, webinars, podcasts, and any other knowledge translation and dissemination needs of all iSPARC faculty and staff. It 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 various dissemination products, and web-based and social media campaigns. The primary goal of the Communications Program is to speed the implementation of evidenced-based practices and the translation of research findings into actual practice in the community.



The Communications Program team includes **Jean Wnuk**, who manages social media efforts; **Robin Tasca**, who manages four iSPARC-related websites; **Jonathan Lerew**, graphic artist and web content editor; **Emily Sudbrock**, who works on dissemination and training projects; **Gillian Simons**, who works on dissemination projects; and **Rachel DeCola**, who manages the Program's administrative needs.

Communications Program highlights from FY24 include:

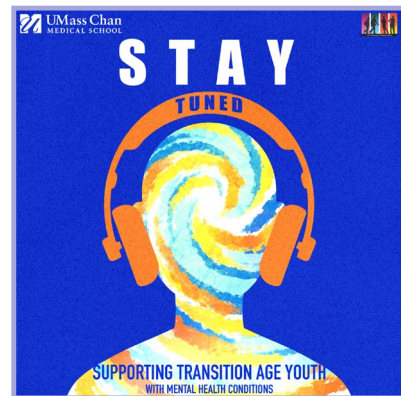
9 New Written Products!

iSPARC published 9 new written products in FY24. See [Appendix B](#) for the full list. The top 3 most downloaded are:

- [Accommodations at Work: What Do I Need to Know?](#) [↗](#) — 1,397 downloads
- [Resources for Addressing Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health in Worcester, Massachusetts](#) [↗](#) — 689 downloads
- [Adulthood Shorts: Let's Talk About Workplace Accommodations](#) [↗](#) — 477 downloads

Producing 11 Podcast Episodes!

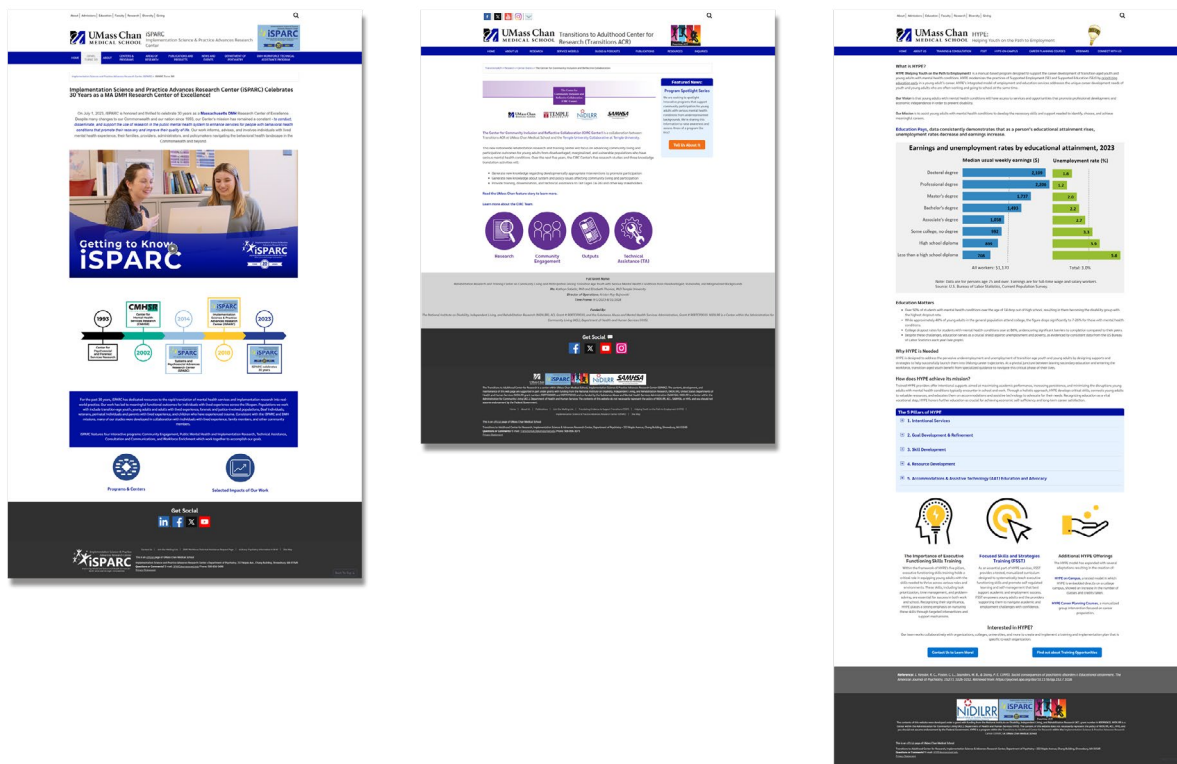
The [S.T.A.Y. Tuned: Supporting Transition-Age Youth Podcast](#) [↗](#) by the Learning & Working RRTC at the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research and the CIRC Center is produced by and for young adults with mental health conditions. The podcast is designed to share useful information that the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research 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. **Eleven episodes** were produced in FY24. See [Appendix B](#) for the listing and links to these episodes.



5 New Webpages!

- 30th Anniversary as a DMH Research Center of Excellence [webpage](#) [↗](#) launched
- Meet Megan Kelly, new iSPARC Center Director [webpage](#) [↗](#)
- Meet Kathryn Sabella, new Director of The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research [webpage](#) [↗](#)

- The Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration (CIRC Center) [pages](#) [↗](#)
- Revamp of HYPE (Helping Youth on the Path to Employment) [site](#) [↗](#)



Co-hosting the DMH Research Centers of Excellence Conference!

On May 13, 2024, 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 [Innovative Prevention and Treatment Strategies for Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges](#) [↗](#). Over 175 individuals attended the conference, including DMH staff, individuals with lived experience, family members, providers, and clinicians. (See [page 22](#) for conference additional details). Featured speakers included: Dr. Eden Evins, MGH; Dr. Lourah Kelly, iSPARC; Dr. Randi Schuster, MGH; Drs. Melissa Anderson and Alex Wilkins, iSPARC/DeafYES. Panel members were Val Comerford, Central MA DMH; Scott Francis, MA Organization for Addiction Recovery; and Celeste Clerk, Western MA DMH.

Providing High-impact Presentations and Trainings! Such as:












- In July 2023, Dr. Megan Kelly presented *Chronic Pain, Problematic Substance Use, and the Moderating Effect of Psychological Flexibility for U.S. Veterans during COVID-*

19 and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Managing Cravings and Addictive Behaviors at the ACBS World Conference 21 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

- In August 2023, **Dr. Lourah Kelly** presented the poster *Does Personalized Mean Popular? Content Analysis of Suicide Prevention Smartphone Applications* at the American Psychological Association Convention in Washington, DC.
- In September 2023, **Dr. Brian Stevenson** presented *Supported Employment: Engage & Keep (SEEK) Description and Overview* at the Veterans Health Administration National Vocational Rehabilitation Managers' Training in Washington, DC.
- In October 2023, **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Mental Health Disorders in the Perinatal — Underdiagnosed and Undertreated* at the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) 8th Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.
- In October 2023, **Drs. Nancy Byatt and Martha Zimmermann** gave several presentations at the Marcé of North America (MONA) 2023 Conference in Alexandria, VA.
- In October 2023, **Colleen McKay** presented *Partners in Research: Helping to Build the Evidence* at the 2023 USA Clubhouse Conference in Salt Lake City, UT.
- In November 2023, **Drs. Marsha Ellison** and Marianne Farkas presented *Advances in Knowledge Translation: Principles & Practices* at the Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability & Rehabilitation Research 2023 Virtual Knowledge Translation Conference.
- In November 2023, **Drs. Michelle Crist and Dara Drawbridge** gave two presentations at the American Society of Criminology Conference in Philadelphia, PA.
- In December 2023, **Dr. Radley (Chris) Sheldrick** delivered *Cost as Key to Sustainability: Revenue Optimization as an Implementation Strategy for Integrated Behavioral Health* as a platform presentation at the 16th Annual Academy Health Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation.
- In February 2024, **Drs. Maryann Davis, Marsha Ellison, Kathryn Sabella and Michelle Mullen** presented *Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for Transition Age Youth (TAY) With Serious Mental Health Conditions (SMHC)* at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) webinar.
- In March 2024, **Dr. Spencer Lawson, Emma Narkewicz, and Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Disparate Impact of Risk Screening and Assessment: A Systematic Review* at the 2024 Annual Conference of the American Psychology-Law Society in Los Angeles, CA.

- In April 2024, **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Increasing Access to Perinatal Mental Health Care: The Perinatal Psychiatry Access Program Model* at the Health Affairs Perinatal Mental Health and Well-Being Briefing.
- In May 2024, **Dr. Kim Yonkers** gave several presentations at the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting in New York, NY
- In May 2024, **Drs. Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins** each presented at the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA) 2024 Conference in Atlanta, GA.
- In June 2024, **Dr. Shaobing Su** presented at the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (ISSBD) 2024 Biennial Meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal

FY24 By the Numbers

-  iSPARC faculty and staff gave **147** presentations to a total of approximately **10,497** audience members. **33** of these presentations took place in Massachusetts and reached **1,251** Massachusetts constituents.
-  iSPARC published **9** new written products (see above).
-  **6,622** individuals are subscribed to iSPARC email lists.
-  iSPARC websites had **103,160** visits (FY23 = 83,786 visits) from **86,643** unique users (FY23 = 69,177 users) with **148,988** page views (FY23 = 116,336 views).
-  More than **53,000** dissemination products were downloaded from iSPARC websites and e-journals.
-  Our videos on YouTube have had **22,881** view.
-  There were **1,659** views of our American Sign Language translation videos on our iSPARC YouTube Channel (FY23 = 1,644).
-  iSPARC had **2,344** Facebook followers across our different accounts.
-  Our X (formerly Twitter) pages had **2,143** followers (FY23 = 2,017).
-  Our LinkedIn page had **902** followers, an increase of over 350 followers from FY23 (FY23 = 544).
-  The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's Instagram account had **343** followers (FY23 = 305).

Community Engagement Program

In FY24, the Community Engagement Program was co-led by **Drs. Melissa Anderson** and **Celine Larkin** (July 2023 – February 2024), and **Holly St. Jean** (February 2024 – present). 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

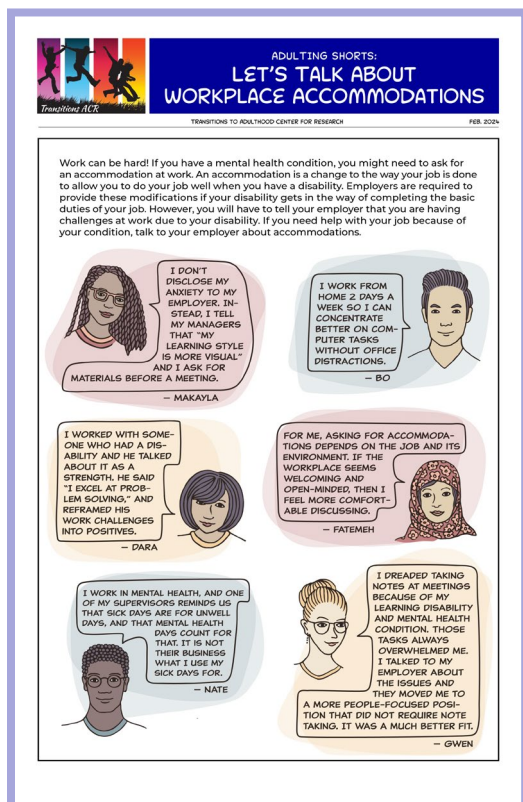
The weSPARC Insight Advisory Board is comprised of up to ten adults across the lifespan with lived mental health experience. The board is co-facilitated by **Dr. Melissa Anderson** and **Vered Brandman**. The board members: (1) review and provide feedback on iSPARC research proposals, projects, and ideas 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 11 times in FY24 and focused on continuing to cohere as a team, having iSPARC researchers present their work to the board (e.g., **Drs. Nana Marfo**, **Lourah Kelly**, and **Spencer Lawson**), dissemination of board materials, recruitment of new members, and creating content for May is Mental Health Month. weSPARC Insight created a campaign for [May is Mental Health Month](#) [↗](#) that is posted on iSPARC's website. The members



contributed their thoughts, feelings, and experiences on the topic of connection and the relationship between connection and mental health. A tipsheet to help guide researchers about how to most effectively present to the board was also created and finalized with plans to disseminate more broadly in FY25.

Family Advisory Board



Across FY24, the Family Advisory Board (FAB) was co-facilitated by **Jean Wnuk** and **Holly St. Jean**. In June 2024, **Vanessa Wagner-Mitchell** stepped into a co-facilitator role to replace Holly St. Jean. The board met 11 times in FY24 and is comprised of 14 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. The FAB and our YAB will take part in the PCORI-funded *Improving Research Partnership with Engagement Mapping: A Pilot Study to Advance Engagement Science* (Engage Initiative) project that started in May 2024 (for more information about the Engage Initiative Project, see [Appendix A](#)). We brought on several new members this year and were able to spend a meeting with Dr. Michelle Munson, from the Silver School of Social Work at NYU, to provide on Community Engaged Research (CER) and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to help the FAB be more effective as an

advisory board. Examples of topics presented at FAB meetings:

- Provided feedback on two Autism screening checklists to see if they should be included in a National Institutes of Health (NIH) R34 grant application
- Reviewed recruitment flyers and a project summary of the Advancing Employment through Career Technical Education (CTE) Policy & Practice study
- Were introduced to and discussed the new NIDILRR/SAMSHA funded [The Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration](#) (CIRC Center)
- Provided feedback on the language and design of two Learning & Working RRTC Comics
- Shared stories about any barriers in finding work/career or with finishing school their children experienced

Young Adult Advisory Board

The Young Adult Advisory Board (YAB) was co-facilitated by **Maya Ingram** and **Tracy Neville**, with **Mei Pearlstein** replacing Maya as co-facilitator in October 2023. It is comprised of 15 diverse young adults from around the United States, all of whom identify as having experience of serious mental health conditions. To include a diverse array of intersectional identities, YAB co-facilitators conducted a thorough recruitment process in FY24 which emphasized expanded representation of neurodiversity, race, system experiences, LGBTQIA+ community members, genders, rural and urban dwellers, and socioeconomic statuses. Some YAB members spoke about their lived experiences on the S.T.A.Y. Tuned Podcast, Supporting Transition Aged Youth with Mental Health Conditions. In FY24, the YAB met 12 times to provide feedback on grant-funded research projects such as:



- **Drs. Maryann Davis and Michelle Mullen's** *Focused Skill & Strategy Training to Support Employment of Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions* (FSST at Work) project
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly's** National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) funded *Development and Evaluation of an Avatar-Guided Mobile Health Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Misuse and Suicidality* (EA-Avatar)
- Various dissemination and knowledge translation projects
- New NIDILRR/SAMSHA funded *The Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration* (CIRC Center)
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded *Collaborative Hub for Emerging Adult Recovery Research* (CHEARR)

Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council

The Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council is housed within the Lifeline for Families Research Program. The council was co-facilitated by **Dee Logan** and Dr. Karen Tabb Dina, Associate Professor Social Work/Beckman Institute at the University of



Illinois Urbana-Champaign. During FY24 the Lifeline for Families team offered members a role as co-facilitator of the council with **Ms. Logan** and one became co-facilitator in June 2024. Dr. Tabb will become the faculty advisor to the council. The Council is comprised of 16 diverse individuals with lived experience of a mental health condition during the perinatal period. In FY24, the Postpartum Mental Health Advisory

Council met 6 times to provide feedback on grant-funded research projects and provided valuable information for multiple PCORI research proposals. Members also shared an experience about presenting a poster about the Council's Journey Maps at the 2023 Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation. In FY24, the Lifeline for Families team received funding to conduct two Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) projects, Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity (Pathways) (PI **Dr. Nancy Byatt**) and Improving Research Partnership with Engagement Mapping: A Pilot Study to Advance Engagement Science (site PI **Dr. Radley (Chris) Sheldrick**). The Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council will be vital to both projects and will be invited to work as Co-Investigators on various parts of the projects (see [Appendix A](#) for more information).

Programmatic Activities

In addition to supporting the activities of the advisory boards described above, the Community 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. In FY24, we identified several areas where our center excelled at involving communities of focus:

- Developing recruitment procedures
- Developing recruitment materials
- Identifying non-academic sources of dissemination
- Supporting development of products
- Conducting community workshops/presentations
- Developing and presenting webinars and/or other multi-media content

- Conceptualizing manuscripts
- Preparing conference presentations
- Presenting at conferences (i.e., presentation, posters)
- Discussing implications of study findings
- Identifying the “reach” of a project (i.e., # presentations, papers, social media impact, etc.)
- Conducting internal team evaluations and debrief of a project (i.e., challenges, successes)

Based on the FY24 PAR-PAT results, the Community Engagement team identified that iSPARC investigators could benefit from additional support with involving their community of focus in the early stages of research development: working on the grant proposal; developing the project budget; developing the analytic plan; refining and finalizing the study protocol; developing the IRB application; developing the project schedule; etc. The Community Engagement Program will continue to provide coaching and consultation in these areas of growth across FY25.

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 FY24 include the fifth annual administration of the iSPARC Diversity and Engagement Survey, as well as the successful inauguration of the iSPARC postdoctoral fellowship pipeline.

Fifth Annual iSPARC Diversity and Engagement Survey

The data presented below were collected across January and February 2024 and reflect the responses of 47 iSPARC staff and faculty members.

Workforce Diversity

➤ FY24 Strengths:

- 6.4% of staff and faculty identified as Hispanic/Latino, as compared to only 2.9% in FY23.
- 6.7% of staff and faculty identified as Asian, as compared to only 2.9% in FY23.
- 17.0% of staff and faculty identified as a being born outside of the United States, as compared to only 2.9% in FY23.
- 23.4% of staff and faculty identified as an individual with a disability, as compared to only 4.1% of the Worcester County workforce.
- 66.0% of staff and faculty identified as an individual with lived mental health experience, as compared to 62.9% in FY23.

➤ FY24 Areas for Improvement:

- 80% of iSPARC staff and faculty identified as White, non-Hispanic. This finding is slightly lower than the surrounding Worcester County population (84% White, non-Hispanic). However, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift of much of our workforce to a hybrid or remote space, iSPARC personnel are now drawn from a much wider catchment area than Worcester County and, as such, should begin to reflect the diversity of our nationwide population.

Inclusion and Engagement

➤ FY24 Strengths:

- More than 91% of staff and faculty reported that “the leadership if iSPARC is committed to treating people respectfully.”
- More than 97% of staff and faculty reported that “I feel that my work contributes to the mission of iSPARC.”
- 89% of faculty reported that they “have opportunities to work successfully in settings with diverse colleagues” at iSPARC. This was a 69% increase from the previous survey year!
- 100% of faculty reported that “there is someone at iSPARC who encourages my development.” This was a 60% increase from the previous survey year!
- More than 80% of staff and faculty reported that they “consider at least one of my co-workers to be a trusted friend.” This was a 35% increase from the previous year!
- 90% of faculty reported that “they receive support for working with diverse groups and working in cross-cultural situations.” This was a 30% increase from the previous year!

➤ FY24 Areas for Improvement:

- Only 50% 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 a steady improvement upon the 33% finding for this item in FY23 (and 25% 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.

- 68% of staff reported that they “feel connected to the vision, mission, and values of iSPARC.” This represents a 23% decrease from FY23.
- 70% of staff reported that they “believe that iSPARC reflects a culture of civility.” This was a 20% decrease from FY23.

Future Efforts

For FY25, we will initiate a new iSPARC DEI committee. This committee, comprising several staff and faculty members working together, will be led by our new DEI lead, **Mei Pearlstein**. Guided by our Diversity and Engagement survey, we have identified several DEI initiatives for that the new DEI committee will work on for the upcoming year:

- We will develop a shared definition of “cultural competence” and what that means for iSPARC, including the development of guidelines for our research and other work.
- Continuing the progress that we saw in FY24 on iSPARC staff and faculty receiving support for working with diverse groups, we will obtain more resources and information on how to recruit diverse samples in research and how to conduct research with cultural competence in mind.
- We will continue to prioritize the recruitment of a diverse workforce, including both staff and faculty.
- We will initiate an iSPARC Diversity Seminar Series, which will involve monthly lunch and learn sessions with invited speakers who are experts in the field and focus on DEI in research and professional development. In FY24, we have already moved in this direction with several iSPARC-ILs focused on DEI topics. Given the popularity and identified need, we will begin a separate seminar series for these important discussions in FY25.

We are also grateful to the UMass Chan Diversity and Inclusion Office, who have supported our work and growth on DEI initiatives in FY24 and their continued support of us in FY25.

Faculty Development Program

The iSPARC Faculty Development Program is co-led by Drs. **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 FY24 promotions of four stellar iSPARC colleagues:

- In July 2023, **Dr. Michelle Mullen** was promoted to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.
- In December 2023, **Dr. Lourah Kelly** was promoted to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry with a secondary appointment in the Department of Emergency Medicine.
- In March 2024, **Dr. Spencer Lawson** was promoted to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.
- In March 2024, **Dr. Michelle Crist** was promoted to Instructor of Psychiatry.

Faculty Coaching

Each year, iSPARC faculty members are offered the opportunity to meet with seasoned faculty (e.g., Drs. **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 which continued through FY23. Across FY24, some cohorts continue to meet regularly to discuss ways to integrate leadership principles from Dare to Lead and other resources into their work.

Also, in FY24, iSPARC faculty continued conversations about training needs within their monthly Faculty Meeting. Several trainings were identified and shared by faculty, and all faculty members were encouraged to apply for training funds as needed via the iSPARC Professional Development Fund. Through this fund, iSPARC supported three professional development applications: (1) a Policy Focused Implementation Science training; (2) study materials for the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM®) Certification Exam; and (3) a Specialist Knowledge Translation training.

iSPARC Collaborative Pilot Study Program

Planning for the new iSPARC Collaborative Pilot Study Program began during FY24. iSPARC will solicit applications for pilot study grants of up to \$10,000 for a 1-year project. iSPARC investigators, junior investigators (fellows and residents), and investigators from outside of iSPARC, but part of UMass Chan Medical School (provided they collaborate with an iSPARC investigator on the proposed project) are eligible for this program. Proposed projects will address research topics consistent with iSPARC's mission, goals, and priorities. Additionally, proposed projects will build new collaborations between two iSPARC investigators or build a new collaboration between an iSPARC investigator and an investigator at UMass Chan Medical School who is external to iSPARC. Projects should have high potential for leading to future external funding. The iSPARC Collaborative Pilot Study Program will roll out in FY25.

iSPARC Grant Support Team

During FY24, the Grant Support Team met twice monthly to provide iSPARC faculty and postdoctoral fellows with scientific and content expertise on their 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 FY24 included **Drs. William McIlvane, Stephenie Lemon, Kathryn Sabella, Bo Wang, Spencer Lawson, and Radley C. Sheldrick and Dee Logan.**

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 FY24, the Grant Support Team reviewed 12 grant proposals across 17 meetings. FY24 proposals reviewed by the Grant Support Team include:

Funded!

- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Community Living and Participation among Transition Age Youth with Serious Mental Health Conditions from Disadvantaged, Vulnerable, and Marginalized Backgrounds — NIDILRR & SAMHSA — **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**
- The Learning & Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research & Training Center (will start in FY25) — NIDILRR — **Drs. Marsha Ellison & Michelle Mullen**

Under Review

- An Investigation of Gender Differences in Excessive Alcohol Use in Young Adulthood and Middle Age: Characterizing the Influence of Multiple Social Roles, Stress, and Poor Mental Health — NIAAA R03 — **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**
- Autism Screening and Assessment Process for Juvenile Justice (ASAP-JJ) — NIMH R34 re-submission — **Drs. Gina Vincent & Jean Frazier**
- Comparative Effectiveness of Psychiatry Access Program Influence on Maternal Morbidity and Mortality — PCORI — **Dr. Nancy Byatt**
- Cultural and Contextual Adaptation of Family Strengthening Intervention for Chinese American Children Affected by Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation — NIH R21 — **Dr. Shaobing Su**
- Reaching Calm: A Digital Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety Disorder — R23 re-submission — **Dr. Martha Zimmermann**

Not Funded

- Advancing the Science of Systems-Level Behavioral Interventions Through the Development, Implementation, and Dissemination of Ontologies: An Application to Improve Equity in Perinatal Mental Health — NIMH U01 — **Dr. Radley (Chris) Sheldrick**
- Implementing Person-Centered First Encounters with Motivational Interviewing — NIMH R34 — **Dr. Marsha Ellison**

- **Pregnancy, Birthing, and Parenting with Substance Use Disorder Patient-Engaged Resource Center (PBPP-PERC) — NIH R24 — Drs. Kathryn Sabella, Lourah Kelly and Dara Drawbridge**
- **Development of Resources for Implementation and Dissemination of the Clubhouse Model for Persons with Brain Injuries — NIDILRR Development FIRG — Colleen McKay (will re-submit in FY25)**
- **Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Grant Award — NIH F31 — Clevanne Julce, PhD Candidate, Dr. Nancy Byatt's mentee**

Fulfillment of the DMH Contract

Fiscal Year 2025 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 2024:

Performance Measure	FY22	FY23	FY24
Number of research projects approved by DMH ¹	40	42	55
Number of research proposals submitted & approved by an IRB ²	19	24	23
Number of grants submitted ³	15	21	29
Number of grants approved for funding ⁴	8	11	10

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 2024 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	FY22	FY23	FY24
External funding obtained	\$10,396,644	\$11,346,921	\$15,445,962

Peer Reviewed Publications

In FY24, iSPARC faculty and staff submitted and/or published a total of 152 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	FY22	FY23	FY24
Number of papers submitted & accepted for publication ⁵	138	177	163

Other Dissemination Efforts

iSPARC continued to conduct trainings and give presentations at a wide variety of venues throughout FY24. 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	FY22	FY23	FY24
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	27	64	33
Number of state and provider workforce members, individuals with lived experience and family members with whom research information was shared ⁶	865	2,593	1,251

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 FY24. 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: Dangerousness Training and Advancing Pretrial Reform in Massachusetts

PI: Gina Vicent, PhD

Funding: Massachusetts Probation Service

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$124,535

Time Frame: 05/09/2023–06/30/2024

Description: Training and technical assistance project with the Massachusetts Probation Service and its criminal justice partners to establish research-informed policies and practices to define and identify pretrial defendants who are likely to be dangerous in the future.

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

PI: Michelle Mullen, PhD

Funding: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$52,400

Time Frame: 07/01/2023–06/30/2024

Description: The HYPE Course Facilitator Training (HCFT) is a blended online training that teaches providers in Young Adult Access Centers (YAAC's) and other organizations in the facilitation skills and content they need to facilitate career preparation courses: Career Decisions, Work Prep, and School Prep. Each course is set up similarly to a topical seminar, with 6–7, 1.5-hour sessions that combine information, activities, and home exercises designed to help prepare young adults for careers, employment, and post-secondary education. Course sessions are expected to be followed by individual sessions conducted by course facilitators to support movement in career planning and participation in work and school. Leveraging HYPE's Learning Management System, this blended online training is conducted with both asynchronous/at-your-own-pace elements and live practice, feedback, and demonstrations to increase competency and confidence.

Title: Juvenile Diversion Lab Technical Assistance Project

PI: Gina Vincent, PhD

Funding: Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$70,169

Time Frame: 07/01/2023–06/30/2024

Description: A technical assistance project to assist the MA Office of the Child Advocate and MA Department of Youth Services develop a mental health screening and risk/needs for reoffending screening protocol for pre-file youth diversion in Massachusetts. Three sites will become part of this Diversion Lab and will receive technical assistance and training.

Title: The Lifeline for Moms Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs — Year 5
PIs: Nancy Byatt, DO, MS, MBA, DFAPA, FACLP & Tiffany Moore Simas, MD, MPH, MEd
Funding: Perigee Fund
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$200,000
Time Frame: 07/01/2023–06/30/2024

Description: The goals of this contract were to continue to strengthen work from the past four years with a commitment to equity through: (1) facilitating peer learning and sharing of resources among aspiring, emerging, and established Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs, and relevant partners and collaborators, across the U.S.; (2) harmonizing data collection across programs; (3) facilitating quality improvement and program evaluation within and across programs; and (4) engaging in bidirectional feedback with member programs and community partners.

Title: Technical Assistance to Parole Board for Improving Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice in Parole — Use of Risk/Needs Assessment in Decisions
PI: Gina Vicent, PhD
Funding: Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$200,000
Time Frame: 07/01/2023–06/30/2024

Description: Consultation and technical assistance project to evaluate use of evidence-based practices (i.e., risk-need-responsivity) in Parole Board decision-making and parole practices and make recommendations regarding their implementation.

Title: Development and Evaluation of an Avatar Guided Mobile Health for Emerging Adults
PI: Lourah Kelly, PhD
Funding: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)/R00
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$747,000
Time Frame: 09/01/2023–08/31/2026

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: Evaluating Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Therapy Toolkit for AUD and Trauma

PI: Melissa Anderson, PhD

Funding: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$3,625,548

Time Frame: 09/01/2023–08/31/2028

Description: The U.S. Deaf community — a group of more than 500,000 Americans who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) — experiences nearly triple the rate of lifetime problem drinking and twice the rate of trauma exposure compared to the general population. Although there are several treatments for alcohol use disorder (AUD) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in hearing populations, none have been developed for or tested with Deaf clients. To address these barriers, our team developed Signs of Safety, a Deaf-accessible therapy toolkit for treating AUD and PTSD. We propose a nationwide, virtual clinical trial to compare (1) Signs of Safety with (2) treatment as usual and (3) a no treatment control, to collect data on clinical outcomes, and to explore potential mediators and moderators of outcome.

Title: The UMass Chan & Temple Collaborative RRTC on Community Living and Participation among Transition Age Youth with SMHC from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

PIs: Kathryn Sabella, PhD & Elizabeth Thomas, PhD

Funding: National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)/ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$4,375,000

Time Frame: 09/01/2023–08/31/2028

Description: This new nationwide rehabilitation research and training center will focus on advancing community living and participation outcomes for transition age youth (TAY) from disadvantaged, marginalized, and vulnerable populations who have serious mental health conditions. Over the next five years, the Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration's (CIRC Center) five research studies and three knowledge translation activities will:

- Generate new knowledge regarding developmentally appropriate interventions to promote participation
 - Generate new knowledge about system and policy issues affecting community living and participation
 - Provide training, dissemination, and technical assistance to TAY (ages 14-26) and other key stakeholders
-

Title: Adapting mHealth Interventions to Improve Self-Management of HIV and Substance Use Among Emerging Adults in Zambia

PIs: Bo Wang, PhD, MD & Karen MacDonell, PhD

Funding: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$673,978

Time Frame: 09/30/2023–07/31/2026

Description: Young people with HIV in Zambia often have difficulty taking medication as prescribed, miss medical appointments, and drink excessive alcohol and use other drugs. This project will develop and implement a multi-component, mHealth intervention designed to improve HIV self-management and reduce substance use. If successful, this intervention can improve the health of those affected by HIV/AIDS and reduce future rates of HIV infection in Zambia.

Title: Effects of Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Understanding Mental Health among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Children

PI: Shaobing Su, PhD

Funding: National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$746,159

Time Frame: 12/01/2023–11/30/2026

Description: Early and prolonged parent-child separation due to parental migration or immigration may result in attachment disruption that can threaten the long-term mental health and functioning of affected children, and these risks can persist following reunification and through adulthood. Although sending infants back to the home country for rearing is often practiced among Chinese immigrants, especially low-income families, research has been sparse in understanding the long-term impact of early and prolonged parent-child separation and reunification on disparities in mental health and functioning among separated-reunited children and the mechanism through which such relationships may operate. The proposed exploratory sequential mixed-methods research comprises 3 studies — (1) qualitative interviews with affected children and parents, (2) a quantitative survey, and (3) mixed-methods analysis — to understand the mental health impacts, risk/protective factors, and service needs among separated-reunited Chinese American children.

Title: Conquering Hypertension in Urban Vietnam
PIs: Hoa T. Nguyen MD, MS, PhD & Bo Wang, PhD, MD
Funding: National Heart Lung and Blood Institute
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$3,535,329
Time Frame: 12/01/2023–11/30/2028

Description: The proposed Hybrid Type II effectiveness-implementation trial aims to comprehensively evaluate the clinical effectiveness of a multi-level, integrated intervention while simultaneously assessing implementation outcomes when delivered across primary care settings for patients with hypertension in urban Vietnam. If successful, this study has great potential for nationwide scalability and sustainability to address gaps in hypertension control in urban Vietnam.

Title: Assessing Delays in Parole Release
PI: Gina Vincent, PhD
Funding: Massachusetts Probation Service
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$52,430
Time Frame: 01/01/2024–06/30/2024

Description: A partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board and Massachusetts Department of Corrections to examine the length of parole release over three fiscal years in MA and reasons for delays in release to propose and assist the agencies with implementing solutions.

Title: 2024 Competitive Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative
 Local Action Research Partners
PI: Dara Drawbridge, PhD
Funding: Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$56,500
Time Frame: 01/01/2024–12/31/2024

Description: This project provides strategic, analytic, and research support to the Tri-City Anti-Gang Partnership in their efforts to reduce gang violence. Using Getting to Outcomes, this funding pilots the implementation of a Tri City Partnership Young Adult Advisory Board.

Title: Enhance, Implement, and Establishing Effectiveness of the IRACS Program

PI: Spencer Lawson, PhD

Funding: Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$250,000

Time Frame: 01/01/2024–12/31/2025

Description: This project provides strategic, analytic, and evaluation support to the Indiana Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) Program in their effort to reintegrate incarcerated individuals back into society after they have been released from jails. The study team will utilize quality improvement methods paired with implementation science to enhance the IRACS Program.

Title: Building Equity in Objective Prison Classification: A Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities

PI: Spencer Lawson, PhD

Funding: National Institute of Justice W.E.B. Du Bois Program (NIJ)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$599,976

Time Frame: 01/01/2024–12/31/2027

Description: The project will focus on building a scalable method for achieving racial and ethnic equity in objective prison classification, which investigators intend to disseminate to correctional agencies nationally via a collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections. The goals of this four-year project are to collaborate with the Massachusetts Department of Correction to (1) examine the magnitude and drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in their Objective Point Base Classification System, (2) facilitate adjustments to their classification system to reduce observed tool bias and disparities, and (3) pilot the adjustments to evaluate their differential (or equitable) impact on custody level placements and access to programming, both of which impact length of incarceration. Findings will culminate in the design of a generalizable Building Equitable Objective Prison Classification Toolkit to guide correctional agencies nationally to build or improve their existing prison classification systems with an equity lens, while still preserving public safety and institutional security.

Title: American Psychological Association Annual Meeting Early Career Investigator Poster Session

PI: Lourah Kelly, PhD

Funding: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)/R13 Early Career Researchers

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$74,001

Time Frame: 04/01/2024–03/31/2027

Description: This project contributes to public health by supporting early career alcohol investigators and disseminating advances in alcohol research in the context of the American Psychological Association's annual convention. The activities in this application will support the pipeline of new alcohol investigators and their career development, particularly those of backgrounds under-represented in research. In addition, the project will promote the rapid dissemination of new findings within the scientific community and to the broader community of psychologists.

Title: Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity (Pathways)

PIs: Nancy Byatt, DO, MS, MBA, DFAPA, FACLP & Wendy Davis, PhD

Funding: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$21 million

Time Frame: 04/01/2024–03/31/2031

Description: The goal of Pathways is to conduct a Hybrid Type I Comparative Effectiveness Study to compare a healthcare system-only approach to addressing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders in obstetric settings, the PRogram In Support of Moms (PRISM), to a Healthcare-Community Partnership approach. This study will examine what happens when healthcare- and community-based teams partner to deliver care for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. The research has three aims, (1) ensure that researchers engage with obstetric practices that are in greatest need, (2) test the effectiveness of the study's partnership, and (3) prepare to spread what the study team learns to other obstetric practices. The researcher-community partnership is led by Postpartum Support International (PSI), a community-based organization promoting mental health awareness, support, and treatment for pregnant and postpartum individuals worldwide, and UMass Chan Medical School. The study is designed to answer the question, "Should we put our resources into a healthcare system approach or a healthcare-community partnership approach to mental health care?" The results of this study will help states and healthcare systems decide how to develop pathways for increasing access to mental health care for pregnant and postpartum women.

Title: Increasing Research Partnership with Engagement Mapping: A Pilot Study to Advance Engagement Science

Site PI: Radley (Chris) Sheldrick, PhD

Funding: Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$2,090,183

Time Frame: 05/01/2024–4/30/2027

Description: The goal of this study is to advance the meaningful engagement of populations underrepresented in PCOR/CER mental health research studies. The researchers will (1) conduct a scoping review of engagement methods for individuals underrepresented in research partnerships, (2) create a consensus-based guide to engagement methods through a modified Delphi Panel of external PCOR/CER mental health equity and engagement experts, and (3) conduct a pilot study to refine, implement and test the feasibility of Engagement Mapping with four Advisory Councils.

Title: Diversion to Care: Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program

Site PI: Dara Drawbridge, PhD

Funding: Bureau of Justice Assistance, Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$278,828

Time Frame: 2024–2026

Description: In partnership with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court, this project aims to strengthen overdose response and prevention strategies and address overdose along the intercept points of the criminal-legal system in Massachusetts, specifically for persons of color. Activities include a series of sequential intercept mapping trainer-the-trainer and state-wide inter-agency summit on substance use prevention and intervention.

Title: MISSION-CJ Springfield

Site PI: Dara Drawbridge, PhD

Funding: Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$200,909










Time Frame: 2024–2025

Description: This project addresses the intersection of behavioral health and the criminal-legal system by integrating a co-occurring behavioral health intervention, MISSION-CJ, within the Springfield Recovery Court and conducting a local evaluation of MISSION-CJ.

Appendix B



iSPARC DISSEMINATION PRODUCTS

Written Products

- [Demographics and Employment Outcomes: Selected Findings from NIDILRR-funded Disability Employment Research in the 21st Century](#) 
- [Depressive Symptoms in Adolescence as a Predictor of Young Adult Employment Quality: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health](#) 
- [Building a Community of Practice to Improve Dissemination of Disability Research](#) 
- [Adulting Shorts: Let's Talk About Workplace Accommodations](#) 
- [The Intersection Between Food Insecurity, Tobacco Use, and Upstream Factors: Where Can We Go from Here?](#) 
- [Accommodations at Work: What Do I Need to Know?](#) 
- [Adulting Shorts: The "TEA" on IEPs Part 4](#) 
- [Adulting Shorts: Passport to Adulting — Managing Your Paperwork](#) 
- [Resources for Addressing Food Insecurity and Other Social Determinants of Health in Worcester, Massachusetts](#) 



Webinars

- [Enhancing Community Participation among Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions from Disadvantaged Backgrounds](#) 
- [Shattering Myths: Performance, Attrition, and Executive Functioning of College Students with Mental Health Conditions](#) 

Podcasts

- Episode 9: Trauma is a thief- reclaiming your power
- Episode 10: "Too sick" to work? — Breaking the narrative
- Episode 11: Progress isn't linear, you might even need a detour out of school
- Episode 12: Why millennials and gen z love nostalgia & how it impacts mental health
- Episode 13: Salsa dancing, a youth advisory board and peer support for mental health
- Episode 14: Can avatars help young adults manage alcohol use problems & suicidal thoughts?
- Episode 15: “Nothing About Us Without Us”— Practicing self-advocacy as a young adult with a mental health condition
- Episode 16: Suffering in Silence? How to obtain mental health accommodations at work and school
- Episode 17: Leveling up together: Gaming, community, and mental health
- Episode 18: Paving the way for patient-centered therapy with Scott Bryant-Comstock (Part 1)
- Episode 19: ADHD unpacked: The impact of being diagnosed as a young adult

Videos

- [Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients](#) 



Appendix C

NEW iSPARC PEER-REVIEWED
PUBLICATIONS


- Allen, C. H., Gullapalli, A. R., Milillo, M., Ulrich, D., Rodriguez, S., Maurer, J. M., Aharoni, E., Anderson, N. E., Harenski, C. L., **Vincent, G. M.**, & Kiehl, K. A. (2024). Psychopathy scores predict recidivism in high-risk youth: A five-year follow-up study. *Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology*, 52, 1089–1103.
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- Chavez, A. E., Troxel, M., **Sheldrick, R. C.**, Eisenhower, A., Brunt, S., & Carter, A. S. (2024). Child social-emotional and behavioral problems and competencies contribute to changes in developmental functioning during Early Intervention. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 66, 245–254.

- Chriqui, J. F., Asada, Y., Smith, N. R., Kroll-Desrosiers, A., & **Lemon, S. C.** (2023). Advancing the science of policy implementation: A call to action for the implementation science field. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, 13(11), 820–825.
- Doernberg, M., Gilstad-Hayden, K., **Yonkers, K. A.**, & Forray, A. (2024). Provider-patient relationships and trauma among pregnant patients with opioid-use disorder. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 33(5), 569-575.
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