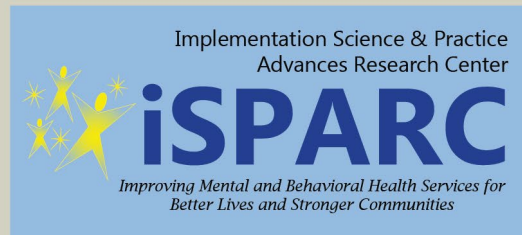


2025

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH



Implementation Science & Practice Advances Research Center
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, UMass Chan Medical School
A Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Center of Excellence



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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 and Behavioral Sciences at UMass Chan Medical School. In FY25, 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.

This year, we were happy to welcome Dr. Kathryn Sabella as our new iSPARC Deputy Director. Kathryn Sabella, PhD, is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, at iSPARC. Dr. Sabella's research aims to a) create new knowledge and understanding about the needs and experiences of young adults with serious mental health conditions, and b) apply that knowledge to the development, testing, and implementation of age-appropriate and culturally appealing evidence-based practices that can improve the lives of these young adults. She is Co-PI of the Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration Center, a research and training center funded by NIDILRR that seeks to improve the community participation outcomes of young adults with serious mental health conditions who have been marginalized or experienced social disadvantages. During Dr. Sabella's 15 years at iSPARC, in addition to helping establish and now leading the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, she has meaningfully contributed to multiple research studies, built her own research portfolio, forged effective relationships with a wide array of staff and faculty, and contributed to strategic planning, operations, and faculty development activities. We are grateful to Dr. Melissa Anderson, our previous Deputy Director, for her work, which was integral to the iSPARC programs, and in particular, for her contributions to the Workforce Enrichment and Community Engagement Programs.

In FY25, iSPARC provided extensive technical assistance (TA) to support the DMH and its partners in strengthening clinical practice and workforce development. Intensive TA efforts focused on evaluating the Office of Inpatient Management's aggression-management pilot using an implementation science framework, supporting fidelity and sustainability of the Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) Hiring Packet and Foundational Training

Curriculum, and issuing a summative report on Peer Support Supervision Guidelines with recommendations to institutionalize peer support within ACCS. iSPARC also collaborated with the MGH Center for Psychosocial and Systemic Research on peer workforce priorities, delivered an ACCS Coaching Webinar to nearly 150 staff statewide, and developed sustainability tools to embed best practices into ACCS contract monitoring. These initiatives underscore iSPARC's role in advancing evidence-based, recovery-oriented practices across Massachusetts.

iSPARC continued to advance a diverse portfolio of innovative, community-engaged research to improve the lives of people with behavioral health conditions. The Public Mental Health and Implementation Research Program fostered faculty collaboration, grant development, and mentorship, resulting in 17 grant submissions and 8 new awards. Faculty collaborations led to new grants and mentorship opportunities, while iSPARC programs expanded their impact through innovative interventions and community partnerships. Highlights include the launch of the first psychotherapy trial for Deaf individuals, national leadership in perinatal mental health through the \$21M *Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity* study, and continued advances in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, vocational rehabilitation for veterans, and youth transition supports. Programs addressing justice-involved populations drove reforms in prison classification, parole, and service access, while others strengthened implementation science, employment outcomes, family resilience, and women's mental health. Across all initiatives, iSPARC engaged people with lived experience, disseminated findings nationally, and trained the next generation of researchers to ensure sustainable, evidence-based improvements in mental health care and outcomes.

iSPARC's Mission

iSPARC promotes the recovery and quality of life of individuals with behavioral health conditions across the lifespan. We partner with individuals, support networks, and community groups to conduct innovative research, provide implementation support, and disseminate promising and evidence-based practices. Our mission improves behavioral health systems and services and advances public knowledge.

Overall, our vision is to improve lives and strengthen communities by advancing behavioral health services and systems.

iSPARC Faculty & Staff

iSPARC is home to investigators from the UMass Chan Medical School Departments of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences & 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 and Behavioral Sciences, Population & Quantitative Health Sciences, Family Medicine & Community Health, Preventive & Behavioral Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Emergency Medicine, and *for*Health 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.

Technical Assistance Highlights

The iSPARC Technical Assistance 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 FY25 include:

- **Inpatient Aggression-Management Pilot Evaluation:** We worked with the DMH Office of Inpatient Management (OIM) to begin an implementation-science based evaluation of OIM's multimodal intervention program to reduce aggressive behavior on inpatient units.
- **Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS):**
 - We completed the full implementation of the Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum for ACCS and shifted our work focus to fidelity, usability, and sustainability.
 - We finalized a Fidelity/Feasibility Report showing high levels of use and usefulness across agencies of the Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum.
 - We developed a sustainability survey tool to embed into ACCS contract monitoring meetings.

➤ **Peer Support Workforce:**

- We issued a Summative Report on Peer Support Supervision Guidelines with three key recommendations to strengthen peer roles in ACCS.
- We collaborated with MGH's Center for Psychosocial and Systemic Research and DMH Recovery Directors on aligned peer workforce priorities.

➤ **Training & Workforce Development:**

- We delivered an ACCS Coaching Webinar to 148 ACCS staff, highlighting strength-based coaching models and practical implementation tools.

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 FY25 are outlined below.

- **Community & Workforce Capacity:** Colleen McKay helped to expand tobacco-free initiatives in Worcester through the Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership, engaging local partners such as The Worcester Community Action Council, El Buen Samaritano Food Program, and Pernet Family Health Services. The team, including iSPARC staff, integrated tobacco education and cessation resources into community events and food distribution sites, promoted statewide campaigns like ENUFF Day, and provided multilingual educational materials. iSPARC also supported the Behavioral Health Workforce Training Clearinghouse (*forHealth Consulting*) by providing technical assistance, developing training resources, and planning an online training on the Role of Peer Supporters for Community Behavioral Health Center staff.
- **Culturally Responsive Care:** Dr. Melissa Anderson advanced Deaf mental health initiatives with Dr. Margaret Guyer and Carol-lee Aquiline (MA DMH) through DeafYES! Trainings and a statewide needs assessment. These initiatives included a three-day Deaf-accessible mental health and suicide prevention training for providers and interpreters, community-engaged curriculum development, and mapping of mobile crisis services to improve access and equity for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing individuals.
- **Juvenile & Criminal Justice Reform:** Drs. Gina Vincent and Spencer Lawson strengthened youth diversion and criminal justice practices. Initiatives included piloting Thinking for a Change (CBT-based violence prevention) in DMH provider agencies, supporting evidence-based decision-making in parole and reducing delays in release,

and training diversion screeners across nine Massachusetts cities on risk assessment and case planning. The team also examined racial and ethnic disparities in the MA Department of Correction's Objective Prison Classification System and provided data-informed recommendations to reduce inequities.

- **Court & Community Partnerships:** Drs. Dara Drawbridge and Michelle Crist supported Family Treatment Courts, Project NORTH, and community-based initiatives such as the Shannon Community Safety Initiative (Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster) and COSSUP Diversion to Care. These projects provided implementation support, training, data infrastructure, and quality improvement activities to enhance recovery, treatment, and community safety outcomes.
- **Young Adult Mental Health & Employment:** Dr. Michelle Mullen and Debbie Nicolellis advanced HYPE course training and career development programming in Young Adult Access Centers. The team trained staff on HYPE courses, collected outcome data, and developed a Young Adult Access Center Toolkit to inform and improve future career support services. Dr. Kathryn Sabella supported the Healthy Transitions (HT2) evaluation project and continued work on the Young Adult Access Center Toolkit.



Highlighted Collaborations with Other State Organizations and Federal Agencies

The work we do in iSPARC extends beyond the Commonwealth. In FY25, iSPARC partnered with state and national organizations to translate research into practice and inform policy. These collaborations focused on strengthening behavioral health and justice systems, supporting youth and families, and advancing evidence-based interventions. The examples below highlight how these efforts are driving innovation and system change across the country.

- **Youth Justice Reform:** Dr. Gina Vincent developed Colorado’s statewide detention risk tool, trained Oregon judges, and delivered national juvenile justice trainings to improve evidence-based decision-making.
- **Reentry & Recovery:** Dr. Spencer Lawson strengthened Indiana’s Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) Program with data-driven improvements and implementation support.
- **Youth & Young Adult Supports:** Dr. Michelle Mullen expanded HYPE (Helping Youth on the Path to Employment) and Focused Skill & Strategy Training (FSST) executive functioning training to Mississippi, New Jersey, and North Carolina to improve educational and employment outcomes.
- **National Mental Health Impact:** Dr. Shaobing Su advanced immigrant family mental health research in New York City, Dr. Megan Kelly created Acceptance and Commitment Therapy resources and social integration app for veterans with mental health conditions, and Drs. Nancy Byatt and Chris Sheldrick led a CDC-funded evaluation of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs.

iSPARC Funding Sources FY 2025 and Impact

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.

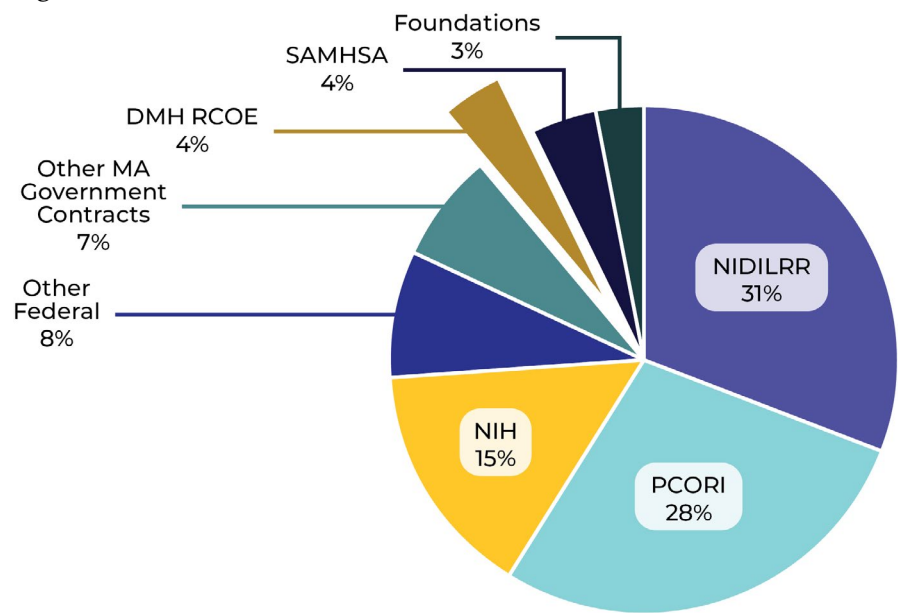
Every \$1 invested by DMH in FY25 yielded a return of \$25.81 to the Commonwealth to fund our portfolio of research, training, technical assistance, and service delivery.

iSPARC leverages DMH funding to sustain a broad portfolio of research and community-focused activities that strengthen the Commonwealth’s behavioral health services. DMH funding supports iSPARC in the following ways:

- Provides salary and program funding for staff and investigators who conduct research on serious mental health conditions, ensuring the development of evidence-based practices and policy-relevant findings.

- Supports the delivery of technical assistance and consultation to the Massachusetts DMH workforce and leadership, helping to inform service delivery and program improvements.
- Provides the resources necessary for faculty development, grant reviews, and mentoring, fostering the growth of the next generation of behavioral health researchers.
- Supports the dissemination and training on mental health innovations directly in community settings, ensuring real-world impact.
- Sustains meaningful community engagement, centering the voices of people with lived experience and their family members so that their perspectives inform all aspects of the research and service work.

Chart 1. Funding Sources



In FY25, iSPARC made significant strides to build on our already strong foundation:



- Managed a research portfolio totaling **\$26,751,598** in grants and contract funding
- Submitted **17** new grant and contract proposals
- Were awarded **8** new grants and contracts
- Published **75** peer-reviewed journal articles
- Submitted **54** peer-reviewed journal articles
- Gave **159** presentations to a total of approximately **22,000** attendees

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Top 5 Research Moments of FY25

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

1. The **Law & Psychiatry Program**, directed by **Dr. Gina Vincent**, advanced several high-impact projects in FY25. A multi-state study on youth violent reoffending highlighted the role of protective factors in reducing risk, with findings disseminated nationally through briefs and webinars. The team also examined racial equity in the MA Department of Correction's prison classification system, informing reform discussions with the MA Legislature. Ongoing collaborations with the MA Parole Board focused on reducing delays in parole releases, while new initiatives included the *Responsivity Project* to improve service access for justice-involved youth and a pilot test of the *Thinking for a Change* intervention with DMH providers.
2. **DeafYES!** achieved major milestones in FY25 under the leadership of **Drs. Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins**. The team launched the first-ever full-scale psychotherapy trial for Deaf individuals (*Signs of Safety*), supported by a \$3.6M National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) grant, and completed adaptation of *Motivational Enhancement Therapy (Deaf-MET)* for Deaf ASL users, with a pilot trial slated for 2025. They also created and delivered a three-day training for providers and interpreters to better serve Deaf individuals in crisis, receiving enthusiastic feedback. Additionally, DeafYES! earned national recognition as an NIH *Build UP Trust Challenge* finalist for their innovative Vital Signs outreach, which has already reached thousands through community events and online dissemination.
3. The **National Collaborative for Implementation Support**, led by **Dr. Dara Drawbridge**, strengthened implementation capacity in justice and community systems across FY25. With the MA Office of Community Corrections, they trained staff, designed new tools, and improved risk-need-responsivity practices in Community Justice Support Centers. They established advisory boards composed of individuals with lived experience and young adults to guide program development and policy reform. The National Collaborative for Implementation Support also supported Project NORTH by developing data infrastructure and training navigators to deliver recovery supports. Their national profile grew with a \$1.4M National Institute of Justice (NIJ) award to test whether implementation science frameworks improve probation case management for persons of color.
4. **Lifeline for Families**, led by **Dr. Nancy Byatt**, advanced large-scale national projects to support families' mental health. Its flagship \$21M PCORI-funded *Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity* study recruited 27 of 32 sites nationwide, adapting interventions to reduce inequities in perinatal care. The team developed a comprehensive *evaluation roadmap* for Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs, aiming to standardize evaluation and strengthen sustainability.

5. The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, directed by Dr. Kathryn Sabella, continued to lead the field in improving outcomes for youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions. In FY25, the Center secured a new round of NIDILRR RRTC funding (awarded to Drs. Marsha Ellison and Michelle Mullen) through 2029 to expand research on career development, human capital, and policy innovation. Key initiatives included the *Peer Academic Supports for Success (PASS)* program, which produced a full set of manuals and completed beta testing at Rowan University, and the *Focused Skill and Strategy Training (FSST)* program, which showed promising effects on executive functioning, education, and employment outcomes. Community-engaged work remained central, with robust participation from young adult and family advisory boards whose lived experience directly shapes research and practice.

2025 Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference

On May 29, 2025, iSPARC and the MGH Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research co-hosted the Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence. The theme of this virtual conference was [Promoting Youth Mental and Behavioral Health: Understanding and Addressing Risk and Protective Factors to Improve Youth Well-Being and Outcomes](#). Over 300 individuals attended the conference, including DMH staff, individuals with lived experience, family members, providers, and clinicians. (See [page 65](#) for conference additional details). The conference included opening remarks by Brooke Doyle, MEd, LMHC, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. Featured speakers included Gina Vincent, PhD, UMass Chan; Cheryl Y.S. Foo, PhD, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School; Daphne Holt, MD, PhD, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School; Michelle Mullen, PhD, UMass Chan; and Vanessa Iroegublem, BA, Mass General Brigham.



2025 ANNUAL Research Centers of Excellence Conference

Promoting Youth Mental and Behavioral Health
Understanding and Addressing Risk and Protective Factors to Improve Youth Well-Being and Outcomes

Thursday May 29, 2025 12:30 – 4:30 PM EDT Zoom Meeting

Featured Speakers

- Gina Vincent, PhD, UMass Chan Medical School
- Cheryl Y.S. Foo, PhD, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School
- Daphne Holt, MD, PhD, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School
- Michelle Mullen, PhD, UMass Chan Medical School
- Vanessa Iroegublem, BA, Mass General Brigham

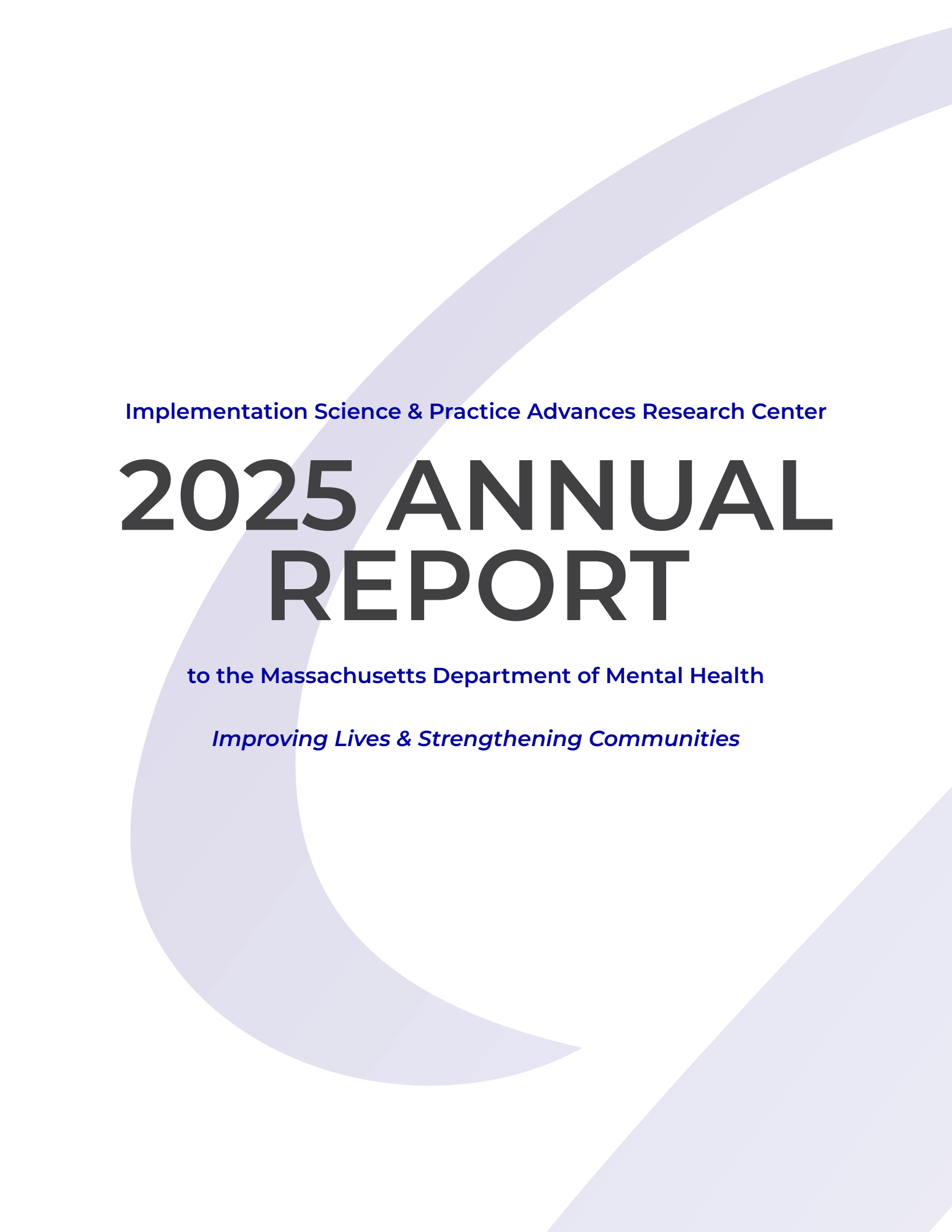
With opening remarks by Brooke Doyle, Commissioner of Mass DMH. Perspectives of people with lived experience will be included.

Register

<https://umassmed.zoom.us/join/register/Ko0Fga0QRyuHizLnxihWwQ>
See the full agenda on our website: https://www.umassmed.edu/isparc/about-our-center/DMH_Conference/

Logos for MASS DMH, iSPARC, UMass Chan MEDICAL SCHOOL, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research.

CMEs for physicians and CEUs for Psychology, RN, Social Work, OT, and LMHC are available. ASL interpreter services will be provided.



Implementation Science & Practice Advances Research Center

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

to the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Improving Lives & Strengthening Communities

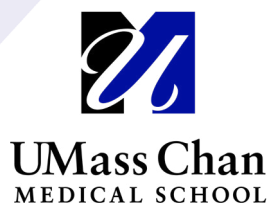
Introduction to the iSPARC FY2025 Annual Report

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 and Behavioral Sciences at UMass Chan Medical School.

iSPARC promotes the recovery and quality of life of individuals with behavioral health conditions across the lifespan. We partner with individuals, support networks, and community groups to conduct innovative research, provide implementation support, and disseminate promising and evidence-based practices. Our mission improves behavioral health systems and services and advances public knowledge.

Overall, our vision is to improve lives and strengthen communities by advancing behavioral health services and systems.

In FY25, 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. This report highlights iSPARC's achievements for FY 2025. We begin by describing Technical Assistance to DMH and its contracted providers, collaborations with DMH, with other entities in the Commonwealth, and with other state organizations. We then describe our achievements in Public Mental Health and Implementation Research that span the nation. Finally, we highlight the specific programs and ways in which the DMH contract supports these activities and our overall organizational structure.



Technical Assistance for DMH and DMH Contracted Providers

The iSPARC Technical Assistance for DMH and DMH Contracted Providers Program is led by **Dr. Marsha Ellison**. The Program is responsible for providing basic technical assistance services and intensive implementation support to MA DMH and its contracted providers, and to mental health service administrators in other states (as requested).

Over this fiscal year the iSPARC Technical Assistance Program benefited by the consultation of program implementation specialists, **Dr. Valerie Perkoski** and **Mary Ann Preskul-Ricca**, Research Coordination by **Morgan Rao**, and expert consultation by **Colleen McKay**, Assistant Professor and Director, Program for Clubhouse Research, **Dr. Megan Kelly**, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of iSPARC, as well as **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 MA DMH leadership and the larger MA DMH workforce via the [iSPARC website](#) . Across FY25, 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 FY25 Include:

- **From Massachusetts:** Dr. Marjorie Welsh, a clinical psychologist at Taunton State Hospital, requested articles related to suicide risk and treatment for individuals who struggle with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and negative self-image related to distorted perceptions of being bad/evil and the need for punishment. **Dr. Megan Kelly** conducted a literature review and sent Marjorie the journal articles and a summary of recommendations via email.

- **From Arkansas:** Ashley Figueroa, AOC Public Education Coordinator from the Arkansas Commission on Children, Youth, and Families, reached out for a consultation with **Dr. Gina Vincent** on risk factors/items to include in a similar screening tool they would like to create for police officers to make decisions about whether to arrest youth versus releasing after allegedly committing a crime. **Dr. Vincent** sent her the manual for the Massachusetts Arrest Screening Tool for Law Enforcement (MASTLE), which she created for use in MA. She also referred Ashley to the National Assessment Center Association to help with their plan to set up a center where police officers can take youth for screening and potentially mental health or family support instead of a detention center. The Arkansas Commission created their own tool (Arkansas Law Enforcement Structured Decision-Making Tool [ALESMT]) and are currently in the process of building it into an app.



Intensive Technical Assistance (Implementation Support)

Pilot Evaluation of Inpatient Aggression Management — FY 2025

Building on insights from the listening sessions iSPARC conducted with inpatient staff the previous year, the Office of Inpatient Management (OIM) had designed a comprehensive, multimodal training initiative aimed at reducing incidents of aggression within inpatient settings. In FY25, iSPARC was then commissioned by OIM to evaluate their aggression-management pilot program. To structure the evaluation, iSPARC employed the RE-AIM framework—assessing Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance. The mixed-methods evaluation combined qualitative staff interviews and quantitative surveys with analysis of existing administrative data (e.g., training participation, clinical practices, and incident counts). The evaluation protocol was rigorously reviewed and approved by both the UMass and DMH Institutional Review Boards.

Evaluative data collection through REDCap commenced in March 2025. Throughout the process, iSPARC remained closely aligned with OIM and DMH strategists, ensuring collaborative engagement at every stage of planning, implementation, and analysis.

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS)

The TA 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)

In FY24, iSPARC fully implemented two products:

- ACCS Best Practice Structured Interview Process for Clinicians (“Hiring Packet”)
- ACCS Foundational Training Curriculum Packet

In FY25 efforts shifted to the fidelity, usability and sustainability of these two products. Both products are publicly available on the DMH website and the [iSPARC Technical Assistance webpage](#) [↗](#).

Fidelity/Feasibility Report

iSPARC finalized its *ACCS Best Practice Structured Interview Process for Clinical Positions (Hiring Packet) and Foundational Training Curriculum: Fidelity and Feasibility Report* in July 2024.

This report summarized the results of the fidelity and usability of both the Hiring Packet and the Foundational Training Curriculum since the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) roll-out meetings were completed. Results were based on two online surveys, distributed to all 18 ACCS provider agencies between late May and mid-June. Survey respondents were asked to consider their experiences with these materials since January 2024 when answering the provided questions. 94% (17) of ACCS provider agencies completed both surveys. A summary of the results is listed below:

Hiring Packet

- Agencies that reported using at least one of the four parts of the hiring packet (Telephone screen (9), Part 1: in-person/virtual interview (11), Part 2: interview for strong candidates (5), and scoring sheets (4) did so with fidelity (fidelity is defined as 50% of the time or greater).

- The most cited reason for not using any component of the hiring packet was due to no clinician interviews.
- 71% of respondents found the hiring packet useful.

Foundational Training Curriculum

- 82% of reporting agencies reported using some or all the modules from the training curriculum. Most agencies reported each module as “useful” or “very useful,” with no agencies identifying any module as “not useful” or having “low usefulness.” The most useful (“very useful”) modules were Integrated Treatment Teams, Trauma-Informed Care, and Motivational Interviewing.

Sustainability Surveys at ACCS Contract Meetings

To ensure the usability and sustainability of the Hiring Packet and Foundational Training Curriculum products, iSPARC, in consultation with MA DMH, developed a one-page survey tool that assesses the use of both products by ACCS agencies. MA DMH is currently working with their staff to incorporate this sustainability survey into the twice-yearly contract management meetings with ACCS providers.

Peer Support Supervision Guidelines (PSSG): Summative Report and Recommendations to DMH

Implementation and roll-out of the Guidelines for Supervision of Peer Supporters in ACCS programs was completed in FY24. A Summative Report and Recommendations was sent to DMH on July 30. The report reviews the introduction and implementation status of the Guidelines in ACCS agencies across the state, and concludes with three consensus recommendations by the PSSG Implementation Committee, that:

1. Peer Support be institutionalized as a regular agenda item in ACCS contract monitoring meetings.
2. DMH should emphasize the ACCS Standard 5.3.2 to agencies. ACCS Standard 5.3.2. states: “Contractors must incorporate peer staff in policy and program development, supervisory activities and leadership decisions.”
3. Central Office staffing report should include peer support staffing numbers.

Individual reports from each of the three PSSG implementation committees are included as report appendices.

Joint Work with MGH’s CoE on the Peer Workforce

The two MA DMH Research Centers of Excellence—iSPARC and the MGH Center for Psychosocial and Systemic Research—met regularly to coordinate efforts on peer workforce issues. Both centers reviewed overlapping priorities and distinct recommendations. Discussions were informed by and included MA DMH Recovery Directors and peer specialists involved in MGH research. In July 2025, both centers will meet with the new DMH Director of Recovery and Empowerment, along with the Northeast Area Director of Recovery, to share aligned recommendations and updates.

ACCS Coaching Webinar

In May 2025, Colleen McKay delivered a webinar titled “ACCS Coaching: A Strength-Based Approach” to 148 staff from ACCS agencies. Drawing on findings from iSPARC’s FY24 ACCS Coaching Report, the session clarified the distinct role of coaching—highlighting how it differs from training or supervision—and outlined practical techniques to enhance staff support for individuals served.

The webinar provided an overview of coaching models relevant to mental health service providers, with a focused exploration of the GROW coaching framework and its application within ACCS settings. Colleen also introduced the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS) as a method for evaluating coaching outcomes and measuring its impact on agency performance and staff development. Both the webinar and the slides can be found on the [iSPARC TA page](#) .

Collaborations with DMH and Other Massachusetts State Agencies

Given the increasingly collaborative and multidisciplinary nature of mental health services research, iSPARC's partnerships across Massachusetts are critical. In addition to our intensive and basic technical assistance to the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) and other agencies across the Commonwealth (pp. 18–22), iSPARC works in partnership with these agencies on several ongoing collaborative projects to better meet the needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Below we highlight several of these collaborations.

Central Massachusetts Tobacco-Free Community Partnership



The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership (TFP) is led by Assistant Professor **Colleen McKay** with project support by **Noriasha Mensah**. In FY25, the Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership (TFP) focused on addressing the intersection of food insecurity, youth mental health, and tobacco use among BIPOC communities in Worcester. Throughout the year, **Colleen McKay** and **Noriasha Mensah** worked closely with local partners to integrate tobacco education and cessation resources into food distribution sites and community events, including continued collaboration with The Worcester Community Action Council, El Buen Samaritano Food Program and Pernet Family Health Services. They also supported youth-focused prevention efforts by participating in statewide campaigns such as ENUFF Day to raise awareness about the impact of flavored tobacco and vaping. Recognizing the importance of culturally relevant outreach, **Colleen McKay** and **Noriasha Mensah** provided multilingual materials and engaged families directly at events like the Leominster Annual Community Health Fair and The El Buen Samaritano 4th Annual Community Wellness Event. They also distributed educational materials across schools and community centers and promoted free cessation services such as 1-800-QUIT-NOW and My Life, My Quit. As they look ahead to FY2025–2026, they remain committed to deepening community engagement, expanding youth programming, and advancing health equity through collaborative, intersectional approaches to tobacco prevention.

Clearinghouse Project with *forHealth* Consulting

iSPARC continued to receive 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 MA Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs). The role of iSPARC is to assist CBHC agencies to successfully implement the evidence-based mental health practices (EBP) that are required as part of their state contracts.

iSPARC Resources on Clearinghouse Webpage

The Technical Assistance (TA) tab of the Behavioral Health Workforce Training Clearinghouse webpage provides access to iSPARC resources on implementing evidence-based practices (EBPs) using the Active Implementation Framework model, measuring fidelity to EBPs, and training and coaching practices for delivering EBPs. These resources include both video clips from iSPARC webinars presented to CBHC staff, as well as curated lists of written resources on each topic.

During FY25, the iSPARC TA program continued to provide resources for the Clearinghouse TA page, participated with *forHealth* in a focus group of clinical supervisors to define priority supervision topics, planned and outlined a potential online training for CBHC staff on the *Role of Peer Supporters on the CBHC Team*, and worked with *forHealth* to advertise the availability of iSPARC TA to individual CBHC agencies. CBHCs can reach out to iSPARC for more information on the [Clearinghouse website](#) .

DeafYes! Center for Deaf Empowerment and Recovery

Massachusetts Trainings on Serving Deaf Individuals Who Use American Sign Language



An effort spanning FY24 through FY26, Dr. Margaret Guyer, MA DMH Director of Research and Workforce Development, Carol-lee Aquiline, MA DMH Language Access Coordinator, iSPARC's 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 the 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](#).

The first three-day training took place in November 2024 and received exceptional reviews:

“ Intensive mental health training that applies to my profession, finally!”

“ The collaboration among the entire group was amazing—and refreshing to have after so long in silos. Also, the amount of humanity and grace given over the weekend really helped to rejuvenate a burnt-out crowd trying to fight the same good fight for a long, long time.”

“ The sharing of stories, the clear and honest discussion and the communication access allowed me to leave with a clearer picture of both problems and possible solutions for better mental health care for Deaf people.”



COMMUNITY

Coordinating Deaf Crisis Services in Massachusetts: A Comprehensive Needs Assessment across Statewide Systems and Agencies



An effort spanning FY25 through FY27, Dr. Margaret Guyer, Carolee Aquiline, and iSPARC’s Dr. Melissa Anderson, Felicia McGinnis, and Dr. Alexander Wilkins are collaborating to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of Deaf crisis services in Massachusetts. The Deaf and hearing co-led team is using SAMHSA Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funds administered by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to conduct a systematic mapping of their mobile crisis intervention (MCI) to identify gaps, resources, and opportunities to increase the cultural competence of their MCI services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Expanding the work of their FY24 TTI (described above), Massachusetts will conduct an in-depth needs assessment of MCI services across the Commonwealth, identify barriers and gaps in current crisis care pathways for Deaf people, recognize existing strengths and facilitators of Deaf people’s crisis care, and develop a critical roadmap that identifies areas for future intervention and implementation.

Eliot Community Human Services, Inc.

In FY25, Eliot Community Human Services, Inc. contracted with the iSPARC Technical Assistance Program to evaluate the implementation of its Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC). Over several months, the iSPARC team conducted a comprehensive review, including document analysis, exploratory interviews, and focus groups with clinicians, managers, and CBHC leadership across multiple care sites.

In April 2025, iSPARC delivered a final summative report detailing key findings and recommendations to support ongoing implementation efforts. Eliot leadership affirmed the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement to ensure successful adoption of the CBHC model.

Law & Psychiatry Program



The Law & Psychiatry Program has been collaborating with state agencies on a national level to assist with justice reforms and appropriate youth and adult behavioral health assessments for over 30 years. In FY25, the program collaborated heavily with five MA state agencies and collaborated or consulted with agencies in another 7 states.

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



After completing a comprehensive environmental scan in FY24, the Law & Psychiatry team (including **Dr. Maryann Davis**) made recommendations to DMH that identified effective, feasible, and sustainable early violence interventions for youth and young adults (aged 12 to 25) that may be most appropriate for expansion or adoption in Massachusetts. DMH selected *Thinking for a Change* as the intervention to bring to Massachusetts, which is a variant of cognitive behavioral therapy that focuses primarily on changing youth thinking and behaviors that relate to illegal activity. In FY25, **Dr. Gina Vincent** and the Law & Psychiatry Program and iSPARC team (**Morgan Rao**, **Mary Ann Preskul-Ricca**, and **Karlie Rice**) worked with the Omar Irizarry, DMH Director of Cross Agency Initiatives, and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Child, Youth and Family Services to implement and pilot test *Thinking for a Change* in two DMH provider agencies. This work was

funded by SAMHSA as a part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act with the goal of reducing violence among youth and young adults. In addition, the team worked with DMH to bring together over 20 Massachusetts state agencies to collaborate on solutions and share resources to reduce violence among young people in the Commonwealth.

Improving Implementation of Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Parole & Assessing Delays in Parole Release



Drs. Gina Vincent, Spencer Lawson, and Ira Packer, along with Kayla Carew and Amy Thornton, have been working collaboratively with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and Parole Board on two projects since late 2023, one of which also includes the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC). The first project has been to provide consultation, training, 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 in the Parole Board and made procedural recommendations. In FY25, the team worked with the MA Parole Board and EOPSS to implement many of these recommendations, starting with the sharing of information between institutional parole officers and the Parole Board. In addition, in FY25, as required by the state, the Law & Psychiatry Program initiated research to examine the length of time between a parole decision and actual release from a DOC facility, as well as reasons for any delays in the process. The Law & Psychiatry Program presented these findings to the state agencies, completed a report for the state legislature, and initiated development of an implementation plan for the Parole Board and DOC to reduce delays to release from incarceration among paroled individuals.

Screening & Assessment in Youth Pre-Arrest Diversion

Dr. Gina Vincent and the Law & Psychiatry Program have been working with the MA Office of the Child Advocate and the Department of Youth Services for the past four 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. This initiative has since been taken over by the MA Department of Youth Services and expanded to over nine cities around the Commonwealth. The Law & Psychiatry Program has continued to provide training to diversion screeners on administration of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-Version 2 (MAYSI-2) for mental health screening, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) for risk assessment, and case planning to reduce risk and improve youth functioning. In addition, the Law & Psychiatry program conducts quality assurance and coaching on case planning for this group.

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 FY25, the team acquired all necessary classification data to examine the potential for racial and ethnic biases in the MA Department of Correction classification system. To assist with data interpretation, the Law & Psychiatry Program convened our 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 team presented project activities and findings to a Correctional Equity in Classification Advisory Board of scholars and individuals with MA criminal-legal involvement. To disseminate and translate project findings, the Law and Psychiatry Program developed data briefs and will provide a presentation to the MA Legislature's Criminal Justice Reform Caucus.

National Collaborative for Implementation Support

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-Principal 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 facilitates a Community Justice Support Center Community Advisory Board, comprised of eight 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), **Ekaterena Pivovarova** (Associate Professor), and **Alexandra Boland** (Clinical Research Coordinator III).

Shannon Community Safety Initiative (CSI) FY25 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), **Dr. Michelle Crist** (Co-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. The project team is **Dr. Dara Drawbridge** (Principal Investigator) and **Emma Narkewicz** (Clinical Research Coordinator III).

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 I), **Elizabeth Orvek** (Application Database Developer), **Joshua Rumbut** (Software Engineer).

Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk Training



Dr. Lourah Kelly and **Dr. Rachel Davis-Martin** (UMass Chan Medical School; Depts of Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine) provide in-person Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk training to clinicians twice per year through a Massachusetts Department of Public Health contract. The Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (ASMR) training teaches evidence-informed best practices in outpatient suicide care. The ASMR research-informed risk formulation model offers key strategies to navigate challenging conversations and systemic barriers to suicide care. ASMR teaches a prevention-oriented risk formulation focused on planning not predicting suicide and helps instill confidence in clinicians and healthcare workers.

Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

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



As part of the Needs Assessment project (see below), the HYPE Course Facilitator Training was conducted in 2024, and in previous years, to train staff in Young Adult Access Centers on how to facilitate Career Decisions, HYPE Work Prep and HYPE School Prep, which are three short, seminar-style career preparation courses. The HYPE team trained 8 Young Adult Access Centers and other agencies in MA that serve as drop-in-type centers for young adults. In Q1 of FY26, the HYPE team (**Dr. Michelle Mullen, Debbie Nicolellis**) will conduct virtual interviews with staff at sites that were previously trained in the HYPE Course Facilitator Training about how they are conducting the HYPE Course now and any needs they may have for assistance.

Healthy Transitions Evaluation Project (HT2)



During FY25, the SAMHSA Healthy Transitions grant completed its no-cost extension year. Accordingly, the evaluation team, including **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** and colleagues at *forHealth Consulting*, focused on supporting Access Center Staff in completing data collection efforts and working towards sustainability. 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 and contributed to the final report.

HYPE Needs Assessment



In FY25, the HYPE team at iSPARC (**Dr. Michelle Mullen, Debbie Nicolellis**) was awarded a contract from MA DMH to conduct a state-wide Needs Assessment focused on employment and education services for young adults (ages 18–30) with mental health conditions residing in Group Living Environments (GLEs). The project also includes interviews with DMH-identified key informants.

During the first half of the year, the team designed the assessment, created recruitment materials and focus group guides, developed supporting documentation, and submitted a comprehensive IRB application to DMH. In the latter half of FY25, the team obtained necessary IRB approvals from both DMH and UMass Chan and began soliciting interest from GLEs statewide via a REDCap survey. The first focus group with GLE staff was held in Methuen, with a follow-up virtual group for young adults scheduled for July 2025.

Due to delays in IRB approvals, DMH extended funding into Q1 of FY26 to complete the remaining project components. Final activities will include additional focus groups and interviews, data analysis, and the development of a report and presentation to DMH to inform the future of career support services for this population.

Young Adult Access Center Toolkit Project

Work on the Young Adult Access Center Toolkit continued in FY25 in part with **Dr. Kathryn Sabella's** efforts on the HT2 evaluation project. The final formatted draft was completed in Spring 2025 and reviewed with Heidi Holland, Director, MA DMH Young Adult Transitional Services, Betsy Edes, Program Director of Healthy Transitions and SEYYA, and Susan Wing, Northeast Area Director. The team anticipates completing final edits in the first quarter of FY26 and hopes to get DMH's sign-off on the final toolkit shortly thereafter.

Collaborations with Other State Organizations and Federal Agencies

iSPARC continues to expand its reach through partnerships with other state and national organizations, leveraging research expertise to inform practice, policy, and program development across the country. These collaborations reflect a commitment to advancing evidence-based solutions that improve outcomes for youth, families, and communities while strengthening behavioral health and justice systems. In FY25, program faculty and staff worked with state agencies, universities, and federal partners on initiatives ranging from juvenile justice reform and reentry support to educational and behavioral health interventions for youth and families. The following examples highlight how these partnerships translate research into action, enhance workforce capacity, and contribute to meaningful system change at both state and national levels.

Colorado Youth Detention Continuum (CYDC)



The Law & Psychiatry Program collaborated with the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum (CYDC) of the Department of Youth Services within the Colorado Department of Human Services to design and validate a novel youth detention risk screening tool. This developmentally appropriate detention risk screening tool was the first of its kind because it was designed to identify only youth at risk for violent reoffending, as opposed to any type of reoffending.

FY25 marked the culmination of a 4-year process of working with representatives from various juvenile justice shareholder groups to design and validate this tool. The tool is now being used statewide in Colorado to screen youth following their arrest to determine whether they are eligible for pre-adjudication detention. During this project, Law & Psychiatry Program researchers discovered that state statutory policies that dictate the cases in which pre-adjudication detention is mandatory drive most detention placements for youth in Colorado. Use of the new detention risk tool alone would have resulted in 5% of arrested and screened youth being held in detention vs. 60% of these youth once the mandatory policies were applied. This finding led to the development of a committee to examine and potentially recommend changes to the detention statute.

Indiana Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) Program



Dr. Spencer Lawson and the Law & Psychiatry Program have been partnering with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) via the Recovery Works program and Indiana Forensic Services through Mental Health America of Indiana to provide strategic, analytic, and evaluation support for the Indiana Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) Program. This program aims to maintain or restore the integrity of substance use recovery ecosystems and to support participants' successful recovery and reentry. In FY25, the project team utilized quality improvement methods paired with implementation science to enhance the IRACS Program through the following activities 1) Analysis of IRACS administrative data and 2) Inventory of facilitators and barriers to implementing IRACS via focus groups and surveys. The project team has produced several data reports for DMHA and Indiana Forensic Services. In addition, multiple project-led presentations and discussions have underscored the importance of embedding implementation supports early in program development and ensuring that data systems are equipped to answer critical questions about program reach, delivery, and effectiveness.

Mississippi



The HYPE team began a project with the University of Mississippi's REACH-MS program in June 2025 that will continue into FY26. Realizing Excellence for All Children in Mississippi (REACH MS) is Mississippi's State Personnel Development Grant which focuses primarily on supporting school-wide and district-wide implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). This project is to pilot the Focused Skill and Strategy Training (FSST) training for Mississippi teachers and school/behavioral counselors. FSST is HYPE's (Helping Youth on the Path to Employment) executive functioning curriculum which has shown that young adult college students with mental health conditions are 6x more likely to persist in school, are more likely to continue to use the skills and strategies, experience higher self-efficacy, complete more credits and classes, and experience a reduction in symptoms, stress, and distress if they have complete the training. This project is expected to equip teachers and school counselors from around Mississippi to better teach the skills and strategies of time and task management, focus and attention, memory and learning, and problem solving and cognitive flexibility to high school students.

New Jersey

Through a research project on the newly funded Learning and Working Rehabilitation RRTC, *HYPE Work First: Helping Youth on the Path to Employment (HYPE) for YAs with Work Goals*, the HYPE team entered into agreements with Bridgeway Behavioral Health Services in Union County, New Jersey. The staff of the Employment and Educational Support Services team was identified during FY25 to participate in the upcoming training in HYPE and FSST and subsequent start of the research project in FY26. This project will bring the development of competency in providing young adult-oriented services that focus on career development through long-term planning, skill development and an integration of supports for work and school, as young adults often do both as they develop human capital. The feasibility research project aims to test whether the implementation of HYPE in a community program is feasible, and whether the research methods are adequate for a future efficacy trial as we continue to build evidence for the efficacy of HYPE.

New York City



Dr. Shaobing Su's NIH-funded research, which investigates the impact of early and prolonged parent-child separation on the mental health of Chinese immigrant families, has been conducted across the Greater Boston area and New York City (NYC). Between 2024 and 2025, **Dr. Su's** work received significant recognition from public officials and community organizations throughout New York. Assemblyman Ron Kim held a press conference to spotlight **Dr. Su's** research and community engagement efforts, while Assemblyman Lester Chang presented a merit award to the Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCDD) Lab in recognition of its contributions to NYC's immigrant communities. Most recently, the NYC Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, along with leaders from several community-based organizations, has begun collaborating with **Dr. Su** to develop initiatives that support the mental health of diverse immigrant families in NYC.

Oregon Judicial Department



Dr. Gina Vincent provided consultation to the Oregon Judicial Department regarding how to improve their use of risk assessment in juvenile court decisions. During FY25, this work included training judges and court staff for a pilot test of a new report template for probation officers to share critical youth risk assessment findings to inform disposition (similar to sentencing) decisions. The process would lead to more individualized decisions that address youths' specific risk factors for offending and promote later success. **Dr. Vincent** was also the keynote speaker for their 2025 Juvenile Justice Judges Conference, speaking about implementation of best practices in juvenile justice.

National Activities

Dr. Gina Vincent was enlisted by the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA) to provide two trainings to commissioners and leaders of state juvenile justice agencies on use of mental health and risk screening and assessment instruments.



Dr. Megan Kelly contributed to the development of a fact sheet on nicotine pouches for providers and patients that was disseminated nationally across the Veterans Health Administration. Her manual on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for PTSD and Tobacco Addiction is also being nationally disseminated at VA health care facilities. Finally, **Dr. Megan Kelly** developed an app, called ACTsocial, to improve the social support and social integration of Veterans with PTSD. This app is being adopted for dissemination by the National Center for PTSD.



Drs. Nancy Byatt and Chris Sheldrick are MPIs of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded grant to conduct a comprehensive evaluation plan for Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs. Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs (of which there are 30 across the U.S.) aim to improve workforce capacity to address mental health and substance use needs during pregnancy and postpartum. 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](#)” calls 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. This “[Roadmap](#)” offers guidance for evaluating and advancing the mission of these programs, drawing on insights from patients, professionals, and Access Program team members across the United States. The “Roadmap” will be presented at the upcoming Annual Summit of the program’s National Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs and subsequently disseminated to Access Programs, policymakers, and funders. In this way, the team continues to leverage their Network to disseminate their research on Access Programs across the country.

Drs. Maryann Davis and Michelle Mullen are the study PIs of the [Focused Skills and Strategy Training to Support Employment of Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions](#) research project in the 2019–2024 iteration of the Learning and Working RRTC. In this project the research team worked with young adults from around the country to teach them executive functioning skills and strategies as applied to employment. The young workers randomized to the experimental condition (receiving the FSST intervention) worked with a facilitator from the HYPE team via Zoom to work through the 12-session curriculum and participated in the study through text check-ins, surveys, and virtual sessions. [Learn more about the FSST intervention here](#).



In FY25, the NIDILRR-funded Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (CeKTER) conducted a Community of Practice (CoP) on Effectiveness in Training engaging knowledge translation specialists from NIDILRR-funded grant projects from around the country. Participants hailed from Alabama, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Mississippi, and West Virginia.

Dr. Gina Vincent was enlisted by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) to provide trainings at their Courting Judicial Excellence training series for new juvenile and family court judges across the country. As part of this effort, Dr. Vincent has been training judges nationally on a) identification of youth behavioral health conditions, b) risk and protective factors for serious reoffending, and c) use of an evidence-based decision-making framework. The goal of these trainings is to reduce youth incarceration and instead provide youth with the services they need in the community to reduce offending and improve success while still protecting public safety.

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 FY25, the major goal of this program was to continue to nurture research collaborations between iSPARC faculty and involve people with lived experience in our research work. Activities to foster collaboration included presentations and discussions of each other's work through the iSPARC Interactive Learning (iSPARC-IL) series, regular research highlights presented during monthly faculty meetings, as well as consultation and collaboration with people with lived experience in our research activities (see Community Engagement Program on pp. 73–78). Grant opportunities were identified by the Grant Support Team and circulated to faculty. Most 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 85](#) for additional information about the iSPARC Grant Support Team). This enhanced environment resulted in the submission of 17 and funding of 8 grants and contracts across FY25 in which iSPARC faculty were Principal Investigators (PI), site PI's, or Co-Investigators.

One new faculty member joined iSPARC this year—Sarah Palmer, MD. Additionally, we successfully recruited a new postdoctoral fellow, **Clevanne (Cle) Julce, PhD**. In June 2025, **Dr. Julce** joined iSPARC's Lifeline for Families Center, where she will be working with **Dr. Nancy Byatt** on the PCORI-funded Pathways project.

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 benefited 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. FY26 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.

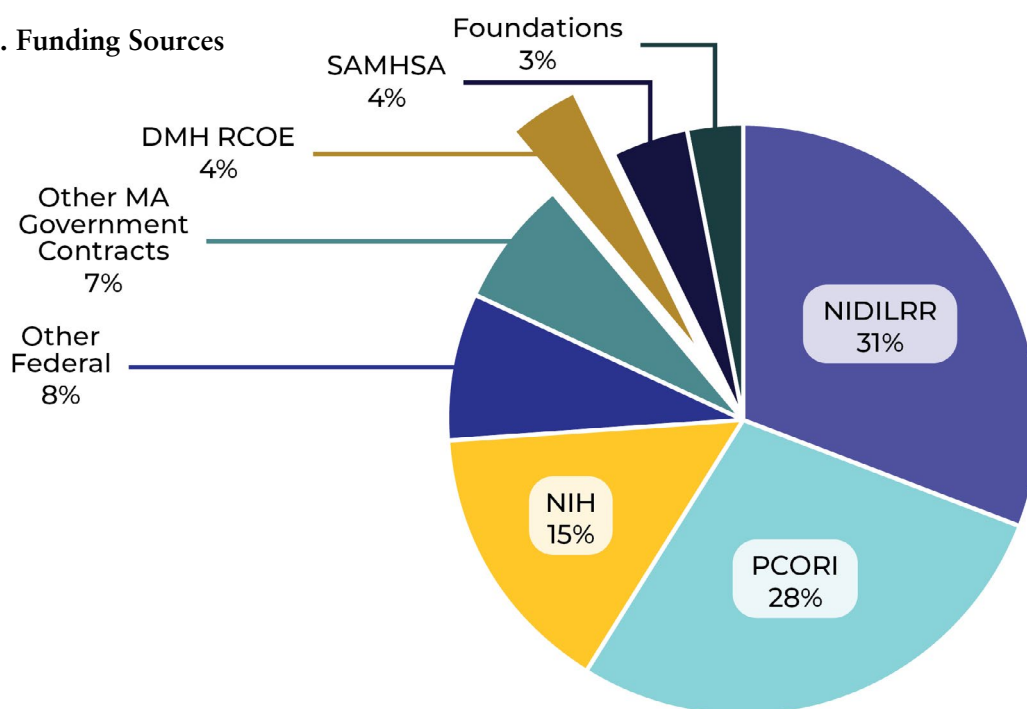
iSPARC Funding Sources FY 2025 and Impact

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 FY25 yielded a return of \$25.81 to the Commonwealth to fund our portfolio of research, training, technical assistance, and service delivery.

iSPARC leverages DMH funding to sustain a broad portfolio of research and community-focused activities that strengthen the Commonwealth's behavioral health services. DMH support provides salary and program funding for staff and investigators who conduct research on serious mental health conditions, ensuring the development of evidence-based practices and policy-relevant findings. In addition, DMH funding allows iSPARC to deliver technical assistance and consultation to the Massachusetts DMH workforce and leadership, helping to inform service delivery and program improvements. Faculty development, grant reviews, and mentoring are also supported, fostering the growth of the next generation of behavioral health researchers. Beyond the academic setting, iSPARC uses DMH resources to disseminate and provide training on mental health innovations directly in community settings, ensuring real-world impact. Finally, funding sustains meaningful community engagement, centering the voices of people with lived experience and their family members so that their perspectives inform all aspects of the research and service work.

Chart 1. Funding Sources



In FY25, iSPARC made significant strides to build on our already strong foundation:



Managed a research portfolio totaling **\$26,751,598** in grants and contract funding



Submitted **17** new grant and contract proposals



Were awarded **8** new grants and contracts



Published **75** peer-reviewed journal articles



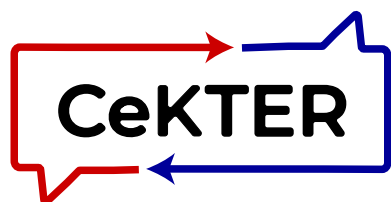
Submitted **54** peer-reviewed journal articles



Gave **159** presentations to a total of approximately **22,000** attendees

iSPARC Research Centers and Programs

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 Nicolellis, Morgan Rao, Robin Tasca 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 policy-makers among others. CeKTER’s overall goal is to assist the 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.

CeKTER Highlights in FY25:

- The CeKTER published an additional six 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*](#) .

- The team overhauled the [CeKTER website](#)  to effectively promote its mission and vision for our shareholders. The site now offers easier navigation and access to more KT strategies and resources and improved accessibility features, ensuring that a wider audience can engage with our content and stay informed about our latest initiatives and research.
- CeKTER hosted five meetings of the Community of Practice (CoP) on Training Effectiveness. The CoP began in May 2024 to provide NIDILRR grantees and other interested organizations a place to share information, experiences, and community-building related to knowledge translation through training. As a direct result of the CoP, we were approached by a core member and provided TA consultation on an intervention manual.
- A proposal was submitted to NIDILRR for a second round of funding of the CeKTER program with UMass Chan as the lead agency, and **Dr. Marsha Ellison** as co-PI with Dr. Marianne Farkas from Boston University. An innovative suite of projects was proposed including a toolkit for designing research products for specific stakeholder groups. In addition, a no-cost extension for the sixth year of funding of the first CeKTER grant was submitted and approved. This will allow for further analysis of CeKTER research data and the development of an on-line searchable repository of NIDILRR funded employment studies.
- CeKTER faculty and staff completed data collection for the second arm of the research project titled: *Which dissemination approach best reaches NIDILRR stakeholders: a comparative effectiveness study*. The team successfully enrolled 150 advocates and policymakers who were randomized into receiving a webinar, research brief, or video. They developed the 3 products profiling the compendium of disability statistics produced by the [Disability Statistics Institute](#)  (StatsRRTC) at the University of New Hampshire. Participation and engagement data in the three dissemination modalities were readied for analysis and future publication.

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 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)-, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS)-, and National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)-funded programs of research revolve around developing innovative,

evidence-based behavioral health interventions and research methodologies. Our teams are supported by stellar research coordinators **Kayla Meza**, **Felicia McGinnis**, and **Mikah Covelli**, and informed by the invaluable lived experiences of several Deaf Community Advisors and Intervention Development Team members.

DeafYES Highlights in FY25:



Signs of Safety clinical trial: Supported by a 3.6-million-dollar grant from the NIAAA, **Dr. Anderson** and team are conducting the first-ever full-scale psychotherapy clinical trial in the Deaf community. Recruitment opened in December 2024, with 16 participants already enrolled in the trial. The trial will continue through 2028 and, if the team's hypotheses are supported, would result in the first evidence-based psychotherapy for Deaf people.



Deaf-MET pilot trial: **Dr. Alexander Wilkins** and his Deaf-engaged Intervention Development Team have completed the process of adapting Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) to be more accessible for Deaf American Sign Language (ASL) users. The team has successfully (1) developed ASL vocabulary for all Motivational Interviewing/MET concepts; (2) adapted the overall structure of the MET intervention for Deaf ASL users; (3) completed adaptation of several intervention tools to be used during MET sessions; and (4) completed ASL translation of seven assessment measures to use during the upcoming pilot trial and future studies. Enrollment for the pilot trial will open in Fall 2025.

- **Fundamentals training:** In FY25, **Dr. Anderson** and key collaborators from the MA Department of Mental Health leveraged SAMHSA/NASMHPD Transformation Transfer Initiative funds to help prepare community providers to better serve Deaf people who are in crisis. One of their major initiatives was 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 provided 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 included 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. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#). The three-day training was met with rave reviews:

“The sharing of stories, the clear and honest discussion and the communication access allowed me to leave with a clearer picture of both problems and possible solutions for better mental health care for Deaf people.”



“ When learning about signs of suicide, I reflected on my memory of how we could've missed that sign before our dear friend ended her life. That was very helpful.”

- **NIH Build UP Trust Challenge:** Across FY25, the DeafYES team has been competing in the National Institutes of Health (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 training film via a series of community outreach events, partnering 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. Across FY25, the team worked to strengthen, implement, and test their trust-building solution.

The first community outreach event occurred on June 17, 2025, with DeafYES hosting an in-person film screening and panel discussion for the New England Deaf community and Central Massachusetts medical community. This film premiere was co-hosted with UMass Chan Medical school and the Center for Living and Working, a Massachusetts-based human service agency for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing consumers. The event was attended by more than 50 people, including Deaf community members, hearing medical professionals, patient advocates, and employees of UMass Chan's interpreter services. The team will present their results from this trust-building event 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.

The team hopes that competing in the Build UP Trust Challenge will help increase visibility of the Vital Signs film, which has received more than 19,000 YouTube views in the 18 months since its initial release. Comments on the film have been overwhelmingly positive:

“ Great job creating this video to assist our deaf and hard of hearing patients to obtain the best quality care possible by helping providers to understand what may be needed for clear communication. I will begin using this right away to help better train health system staff.”

“ This is an excellent resource and so professionally done! The information is current, extremely relevant and accurate. Kudos to all those who were involved in its creation! An excellent educational and informational tool! Bravo!!!”

“ This is so good...Made me cry.”



EmpowerWork Research Program



Directed by **Dr. Brian Stevenson**, the EmpowerWork Research 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 350 veterans with mental health/substance use conditions and has received over 5.3 million dollars in VA research funding to develop, test, and improve vocational services and economic security outcomes for veterans.

EmpowerWork Highlights in FY25:

- The team started a Veterans Economic Security Panel of 10 veterans from around the country with lived experiences related to economic insecurity including homelessness and histories of incarceration. These veterans consult with researchers and administrators on ensuring that programs and projects are consumer-driven. Veterans have shared that the opportunity to give back to the VA promotes their own recoveries from mental health and substance use related challenges.
- The team provides direct vocational recovery services through clinical trials and other clinical services to veterans living with mental health and substance use disorders, and other disabilities. Veterans find these services helpful and supportive of their recoveries.
 - One veteran living with chronic PTSD in an unsatisfying job was supported in resigning their job and successfully enrolling in advanced education at a four-year institution to pursue a degree in a field they were passionate about.
 - Another veteran with chronic unemployment, homelessness, and substance use conditions received job-search support and successfully received numerous job interviews and offers and reported that the hiring manager who had “30 plus years’ experience” told the veteran he had “the most impressive resume he had ever seen!!”
 - One unemployed male Veteran in his 60s with unspecified depression and anxiety, and a severe alcohol use disorder shared the following about the services received through EmpowerWork:

“ We progressed from nowhere to actually getting somewhere in my future employment. And where I’m going and what I’m doing, which I did not know before I sat down with her. So, she was very helpful, and it was great.”



- Another unemployed male Veteran in his 40s living in transitional housing for homeless Veterans with chronic PTSD, depression, and alcohol dependence shared that services provided through EmpowerWork were:

“...almost purpose-built for me. I had no idea what I was going to do with myself, because all of the other options that I have didn't look that great. So, in doing this—this is the roadmap that I'm going to be using for the next five years in order to be able to get to a place where not only am I able to provide for myself, but at the same time do something that I can see myself doing until I retire.”



COMMUNITY

Family Resilience and Child Development Lab



The Family Resilience and Child Development (FRCD) lab, led by **Dr. Shaobing Su**, focuses on community-engaged mental health research with children affected by early and prolonged parent-child separation (EPPCS). The lab's mission is to understand and promote mental health and well-being for children and families affected by EPPCS. Dr. Su is PI of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)-funded R00 (R00MD017269), *Effects of Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Understanding Mental Health among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Children*. The team investigates child mental health and related risk and protective factors among separated-reunited parent-child dyads in the Chinese immigrant community. Looking ahead, the lab aims to deepen and broaden its research to include interdisciplinary research with more populations who have experienced EPPCS (e.g., children of other immigrants, children of military families, and children in foster care).

With support from community advisory boards and community organizations, our research has generated insightful findings for future research and services:

- Over half of families experienced involuntary early and prolonged parent-child separation (EPPCS) (59.8%). Most parents experienced feelings of guilt, shame, and regret for EPPCS.

“If you have the ability, it's better to take care of them yourself.”

- EPPCS threatens child mental health and psychosocial functioning.

“throw things around when get mad.”

“never really talk to new people.”

“had thoughts of suicide.”

“used scissors to scratch his leg.”



COMMUNITY

- EPPCS also disrupts parent-child attachment and relationships. 31.25% of EPPCS-affected families reported impaired family relationships.

“ Although we're together every day, there is still a barrier, there's still a gap.”

- Separation risks included limited parent-child communication, challenges in substitute care, and insufficient early education. Reunification difficulties spanned acculturation, anxiety, strained relationships, and school struggles. However, parent-child contact, family and social support, encouraging schools, and children's coping supported resilience.



Family Resilience and Child Development Lab Highlights in FY25:

- **Publications:** The team submitted 11 manuscripts to peer-review journals (3 being published, 1 minor revision, and 7 under review) (See [Appendix B](#)).
- **Conferences:** FRCD Lab studies were accepted as symposium papers (n=1) or posters (n=4) at academic conferences, including 2025 Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD), 2025 American Psychological Association (APA), and 2025 Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR).
- **Grant submissions:** Dr. Su submitted an R01 (PI) and resubmitted an R21 (Contact PI) based on her NIH K99/R00 research findings to National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) in FY25 (not funded). In FY25, Dr. Su also submitted 3 letters of intent (as PI) to several foundations, including New York Health Foundation, PCORI Pathways Scholars Program, and the Cyrus Tang Foundation (not funded).
- **Public Impacts:** New York Assemblyman Ron Kim hosted a press conference to advocate for the FRCD lab's research project in New York City. New York Assemblyman Lester Chang commended, "Your research on mental health development and early childhood support is both commendable and crucial for our community." The FRCD Lab received a merit award from Assemblyman Chang's office. The team developed research partnerships with 3 new community organizations in New York City.
- **Community Partnerships and Research Dissemination:** The FRCD lab has developed trusted relationships with multiple Chinese community organizations and leaders in New York City and the Boston area. The team hosted quarterly community advisory board meetings (12 members). These community organizations and advisors have significantly contributed to their data collection for the R00 research. Since 08/2024, the team has collected over 290 parent-child dyad survey data (>580 individuals) from the community.
- **Mentorship and Training:** Dr. Su and her postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Xihan Yang, provided hands-on mentorship to a group of committed undergraduate and graduate

research interns on data analysis and manuscript writing. Multiple writing teams joined weekly writing meetings to prepare 7 manuscripts (under review or revision) in FY25. Over 50% of the manuscripts were led by graduate or undergraduate interns.

Interdepartmental Research

Although most of iSPARC's faculty have their primary appointments within the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, several of iSPARC's faculty members are from 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.



Dr. Edwin Boudreaux is a clinical psychologist and Director of the [P50 Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide through Technology Translation](#)  (CAPES). He is passionate about accelerating the transformation of suicide-related care in healthcare settings that are compassionate and person-centered as well as informed by the latest technologies. He brought experience in two domains that will inform CAPES' mission and operations. He has successfully completed more than 20 extramurally funded studies focused on suicide screening, risk stratification, clinical decision making, and brief interventions. These studies have transcended settings to include emergency departments (ED), inpatient medical and psychiatric units, primary care, outpatient mental health practices, and other outpatient settings (e.g., OB/GYN, oncology). Built and led transdisciplinary teams and advanced implementation of healthcare systems-based strategies, like the Zero Suicide framework. Second, has developed, studied, deployed, and commercialized a range of technologies to enable assessment and management of numerous behavioral health targets, including suicide risk. Much of this experience has been gained as Principal Investigator on seven NIH-funded Small Business Innovation Research/Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) grants. The resulting products are not only strongly rooted in theory and evidence, but they are also experiencing exponential commercial successes, which is driving the dissemination of these technologies throughout the country and improving care for hundreds of thousands of individuals. His passion, experience, and network will enable him to work collaboratively with our Investigators and Faculty, our Advisors and Consultants, and our Stakeholders to build a truly transdisciplinary, practice-based center. The Center will lead to accelerated adoption of evidence-based suicide care across a variety of healthcare settings, ages, and socio-demographic subgroups. Accomplishing this goal will save lives, avert morbidity, and save costs by preventing suicide and suicide attempts.



Dr. Stephenie Lemon is a behavioral epidemiologist and implementation scientist who specializes in community engaged research. Her expertise relates to developing interventions and implementation strategies that address social and structural drivers of health and health disparities associated with chronic diseases in communities of low income. She is

Director/PI of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded Prevention Research Center (PRC) at UMass Chan, which is in its 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. Through the PRC, **Dr. Lemon** is leading an applied research project testing an implementation strategy to build community member and public health agency capacity to support built environment changes that promote thriving communities that promote physical activity and social connectedness, among other co-benefits, in 8 low-income Worcester neighborhoods. **Dr. Lemon** is also Director of the Physical Activity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (PAPREN), which is funded by the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) at the CDC. PAPREN is the research partner of DNPAO's Active People Healthy NationSM initiative and includes over 1,000 members across the country from academic, practice and government sectors. **Dr. Lemon's** work is integrated into DNPAO's grantee programs for state and local health departments across the country to provide an evidence-based foundation for initiatives promoting thriving communities.



Dr. Rajani Sadasivam's digital health research primarily focuses 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).



Dr. Bo Wang is a behavioral epidemiologist and biostatistician with extensive experience in behavioral interventions, implementation science, and advanced study design and statistical modeling—including MOST and SMART frameworks. His decade-long implementation science research

focuses on theory-driven strategies to sustain evidence-based HIV prevention programs within the Bahamian government school system. He also leads three projects focused on developing mHealth interventions to promote PrEP use and reduce stigma in Thailand, and to improve HIV self-management and address substance use in Zambia. **Dr. Wang** contributed to data analysis for **Dr. Maryann Davis's** *Peer Academic Supports for Students with Serious Mental Health Conditions* (PASS 2.0) project. In addition, he co-led an NIH-funded study to develop primary and secondary suicide screening tools using both traditional statistical methods and advanced machine learning techniques. Descriptions of projects funded in FY25 can be found in [Appendix A](#). **Dr. Wang** has two grant submissions under review and two submissions in preparation.

Law & Psychiatry Research Program — Research Arm



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 in

FY25—**Karlie Rice**, **Jennifer Pendleton**, **Kayla Carew**, **Namita Railkar**, and **Morgan Rao**. The Law & Psychiatry Program's 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. See the Law & Psychiatry Program's new website for a full description of the program and research projects.



Law & Psychiatry Research Program Highlights in FY25:

- The Law & Psychiatry Program (**Vincent, Rice, Pendleton, & Carew**) completed their unprecedented multi-state, multi-year research on the influence of risk versus protective factors and receipt of services on long-term violent reoffending for youth in the youth justice system (funded by the National Institute of Justice). Along with collaborators **Josh Weber**, at the Council of State Governments, and **Jennifer Skeem, PhD**, at UC-Berkeley, the team published [two study briefs](#) [↗](#) and provided two national webinars bringing in over 1000 registrations each. The team found that there are very few differences in the drivers of violent reoffending across adolescence and young adulthood, and many powerful protective factors that keep youth of all ages from reoffending.
- As part of the W.E.B Du Bois, National Institute of Justice, *Building Equity in Prison Classification Project*, the Law & Psychiatry Program (**Lawson, Vincent, & Railkar**)

conducted gold standard analyses to examine racial and ethnic disparities in the MA Department of Correction (DOC) prison classifications system. Finding the system was operating equitably and in a valid manner in most respects, the team brought together system leaders, national experts, and individuals with lived experience to interpret these findings and shape any resulting reforms. This work is already informing conversations with the Massachusetts Legislature’s Criminal Justice Reform Caucus and laying the groundwork for more equitable classification practices nationwide.

- The Law & Psychiatry Program completed its second year working with the Massachusetts Parole Board and its partners to integrate and streamline evidence-based decisions regarding parole decisions. In FY25, **Vincent, Lawson, and Carew** completed the first analyses of the time required to release incarcerated persons from the Massachusetts Department of Correction following a decision for them to be paroled. The proportion of individuals with delayed release has not changed much over the past three years, and the biggest challenge to release has been lack of appropriate bed space within the Commonwealth. The Law & Psychiatry Program worked with many shareholders across the Massachusetts Parole Board and Massachusetts Department of Correction to map paroled individuals processes and to start generating solutions to reducing the amount of time involved in releasing incarcerated individuals to parole.
- This year, the Program was delighted to initiate its research project within iSPARC and Temple University’s Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration (CIRC), titled *Improving Implementation of Risk-Need-Responsivity & Service Accessibility for Justice-Involved Transition Age Youth with Mental Health Conditions* (Responsivity Project for short). The program is working with service providers of, and individuals served by, Recovery Works in Indiana and the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative in Massachusetts to find generalizable methods for ensuring they get services they need. This project also emphasizes differences between rural and urban communities. [Learn more about The CIRC Center on its website](#) [↗](#).
- **Dr. Vincent, Morgan Rao, Karlie Rice, and MaryAnn Preskul-Ricca** initiated work with the MA Department of Mental Health’s Child, Youth and Family Services to pilot test Thinking for a Change (T4C) with DMH service providers. T4C was selected based on its documentation of feasibility and effectiveness for reducing violence among youth and young adults. The Law & Psychiatry Program will have results from this pilot test in early September 2026. Additional details of this project are in [Appendix A](#).

The Life Compass Research Program



The Life Compass Research Program focuses 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 Life Compass Research Program is led by **Dr. Megan Kelly**.

The Life Compass Research Program is currently working on the development and evaluation of ACT social support and social integration approaches for people with mental health and substance use conditions. This work focuses on both traditional psychotherapy and digital interventions to increase access to treatment.

Here are quotes from clients on the life impact of our treatment, ACTsocial:

“ I’m willing to listen more—more willing to step out of my comfort zone and do more. Reaching out to friends more and not giving up right away.”

“ The treatment ‘kept me calmer’—when I got angry, I would shut down and hold myself physically to stop. Now I have new tools to deal with that, and one is communication and remembering who I want to be in a relationship.”



Life Compass Highlights in FY25:

- In August 2024, **Dr. Kelly** chaired a panel discussion at the American Psychological Association, entitled *Redefining the Target for Mental Health: Psychotherapeutic Approaches that Focus on Life Functioning*. This panel discussion focused on emphasizing improvements in life functioning as the goal for psychotherapy.
- In November 2024, **Dr. Kelly, Emma Narkewicz, Mei Pearlstein, and Tracy Neville** presented community engagement methods with LGBTQIA+ emerging adults with mental health conditions at the annual meeting of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, providing information to the academic community on best practices for community engagement with this population.
- In 2025, **Dr. Kelly** and Life Compass Research Team Members, **Emma Narkewicz** and **Mei Pearlstein**, finished qualitative interviews of the mental health and social integration treatment needs of LGBTQIA+ emerging adults (18–26) with serious mental health conditions. These emerging adults reported requesting assistance with developing skills to identify safe people and communities to connect with, needing therapists that are culturally competent to help support them, needing examples of successful social connections for LGBTQIA+ emerging adults with mental health conditions, and fostering intergenerational meaningful relationships with other LGBTQIA+ individuals as role models and mentors.
- In 2025, **Dr. Kelly’s** project on the development of a provider support guide to integrate the ACTsocial mobile mental health app into mental health care was selected

for funding by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Research and Development. The ACTsocial mobile mental health app provides veterans with PTSD with guidance and exercises on how to overcome social avoidance related to their experience of PTSD and increase values-based living and social connectedness to improve veterans' quality of life. The newly funded project will develop and evaluate a provider support guide to introduce and support veterans in mental health care to use the ACTsocial app, thereby potentially increasing veteran engagement with this app. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

- **Dr. Kelly** finished qualitative interviews on adapting the ACTsocial psychotherapy approach for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and co-occurring alcohol use disorder. Results from these interviews indicated that veterans believed that PTSD, alcohol use, and their interaction were substantial barriers to forming and maintaining relationships, and they wanted a non-judgmental treatment approach that helped them to develop new skills to manage people who encourage substance use and coping skills for cravings and emotions, as well as practical strategies for interacting with others. This work will lead to the adaptation of the ACTsocial approach for veterans with PTSD in early recovery from alcohol use disorder.

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. They 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 non-traditional 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. Lifeline for Families is led by Executive Director **Dr. Nancy Byatt** and Associate Director **Dr. Jessica Griffin**.

Lifeline for Families Highlights in FY25:

- In dual partnership with Postpartum Support International (PSI), one of our longtime community collaborators, the team continued the Research Phase of a \$21 million contract from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to conduct the national Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity (Pathways) study. The Pathways study was proposed in direct response to concerns expressed by the 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, the team is comparing 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 ten states across the U.S. With 27 practices currently recruited, the team is finalizing preparations for implementation by adapting PRISM materials to the Pathways study in both arms and eliciting feedback from PSI and partnering Access Programs with the goal of post-study scalability and sustainability. Further, feedback from the Individuals with Lived Expertise of Perinatal Mental Health Conditions Advisory Council continues to be critical to ensuring the intervention centers on patient needs with a culturally sensitive and trauma-informed lens. Outcomes will be assessed quantitatively through chart review and surveys and qualitatively through focus groups and content analysis of field notes from meetings with each participating practice. Final recruitment and baseline data collection is ongoing.
- The team is near completion of 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” calls 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. The “Roadmap” will be presented at the upcoming Annual Summit of the program’s National Network of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs (of which there are 30 across the U.S.) and subsequently disseminated to Access Programs, policymakers, and funders. In this way, the team continues to leverage their Network to disseminate their research on Access Programs across the country. The team has also published articles in prestigious journals, including *Lancet Public Health* and *Health Affairs*, and our work continues to be featured in major news media outlets. See [Appendix C](#) for a list of published peer-reviewed articles.



- **Dr. Sarah Palmer** received The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Pilot Research Award for Early Career Faculty and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows Award to conduct a pilot study to better understand how Early Intervention services engage with families. This is an exploratory qualitative study to better understand the effects of attachment on Early Intervention service delivery to better inform potential interventions that would allow for improved family engagement in developmental services. Dr. Palmer’s mentors

on this project are Dr. Nancy Byatt and Dr. Elizabeth Peacock-Chambers. She is mentoring a medical student, Noah Lampl, who was awarded the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Medical Student Summer Fellowship to work on this project with her. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

- In addition to the pilot, **Dr. Palmer** is also leading a systematic literature review on attachment in Early Intervention as well as a secondary analysis of two systems-level perinatal depression interventions where she examines bonding and perinatal mood symptoms in the first year postpartum. She has joined the Pathways study where she will focus on building skills in implementation science. These skills will inform an upcoming mentored research grant (K award) application which will focus on interventions to assist families and schools in their transition from Early Intervention to School-Based developmental services.



- **Dr. Radley (Chris) Sheldrick** is the site PI for the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)-funded Science of Engagement Award, Increasing Research Partnership with Engagement Mapping: A Pilot Study to Advance Engagement Science. This project is a collaboration with Dr. Thomas 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).

Over the last year, the team has conducted a scoping review on the use of engagement strategies utilized within mental health services research to engage individuals underrepresented in research partnerships. A total of over 32,000 articles were screened leading to the inclusion of 104 articles and the identification of both engagement strategies and engagement approaches. From the scoping review, the team has conducted a modified Delphi Panel with 61 panelists including mental health services researchers, health equity researchers, advocacy organizations, professional societies, and individuals with lived expertise.

The Panelists were asked to come to consensus on 1) definitions for engagement approach, engagement strategies, and engagement activities; 2) inform the development of the “Template for Description of Engagement Strategies” (T-DES); and 3) rate the available evidence for each engagement strategy and tool identified by the scoping review. Finally, the project has begun to develop a protocol for the pilot study of Engagement Mapping which engages four Advisory Councils including iSPARC’s Young Adult Advisory Board, Family Advisory Board, and the Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council.

- **Dr. Sheldrick** is a Co-Investigator as Director of the Methods Core of the PCORI-funded Pathways to Perinatal Mental Health Equity project. **Dr. Sheldrick** is co-director of evaluation for TEAM UP, an initiative based at Boston Medical Center that is designed to

implement, study, and scale a full spectrum model for integrated behavioral health care in pediatric settings. In the fall of 2025, TEAM UP will implement its model with a third cohort of pediatric practices in Massachusetts. Through the TEAM UP center, **Dr. Sheldrick** continues to direct dissemination of the Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children (SWYC), a comprehensive screening questionnaire for children under 5 years of age that he co-developed with Dr. Ellen Perrin. The SWYC continues to receive interest from large electronic medical record systems and from mental health specialists around the world.



➤ **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.

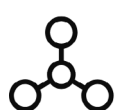
- During FY25, **Dr. Zimmermann** and her team completed participant recruitment, conducting think-aloud interviews with perinatal patients from the UMass Chan Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology clinic (n=15) who were experiencing elevated anxiety symptoms and facing economic challenges. The team convened four meetings with an advisory council of individuals with lived experience of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders to guide intervention refinement. They revised the digital intervention in response to feedback, which now includes SMS text messages, videos, interactive activities, and a website. Results of the interviews suggested high content acceptability and helped identify areas for improvement. Perinatal participants particularly valued seeing themselves and their experiences reflected in the intervention content, noting that it felt reassuring to know that they were not alone. They also emphasized the importance of making this resource available to others navigating similar challenges. **Dr. Zimmermann** submitted a K23 proposal, *Reaching Calm: A Digital Intervention to Prevent Perinatal Anxiety Disorder* to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to pilot test the intervention that has been selected for funding.
- In FY25, **Dr. Zimmermann** was awarded funding through the Center Accelerating Practices to End Suicide (CAPES) to lead a pilot project integrating a novel approach to remote suicide risk assessment into Reaching Calm. As part of this work, she is beta testing a revised version of Reaching Calm at a UMass obstetric clinic and has conducted training with 29 clinical staff and residents. Preliminary interviews with clinicians indicated that they found the training valuable and expressed a strong need for additional guidance and communication tools to help them engage in meaningful conversations about mental health with their patients. **Dr. Zimmermann's** team is currently recruiting perinatal participants to test the updated digital intervention and will conduct qualitative interviews to gather feedback on both the intervention and the suicide risk assessment approach. This input will inform further refinement and identify opportunities to improve integration into clinical care. Community engagement remains a core priority for this work. **Dr. Zimmermann** has collaborated with both the weSPARC Insight Advisory Board and the CAPES Lived

Experience Advisory Board to ensure that the intervention is shaped by those with lived experience and is responsive to the needs of the communities it aims to serve.



➤ **Drs. Esther Boama-Nyarko and Cleverly Julce**, two Lifeline for Families trainees, successfully defended their doctoral dissertations and completed their PhDs in the UMass Chan Morningside Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Population Health Sciences Program. **Dr. Boama-Nyarko's** research focused on "Elucidating the Mechanisms Driving Adverse Outcomes in Racialized Perinatal Populations." **Dr. Julce** examined "Factors Contributing to Psychiatric Medication Use in Pregnancy: A Preconception Perspective." **Dr. Julce** received the Dean's Award for Outstanding Student Mentor in the Classroom or Research Setting and was selected by her peers as Class Speaker at graduation. **Dr. Julce joined Lifeline for Families as a Postdoctoral Fellow in June 2025.**

National Collaborative for Implementation Support (NC-IS)



Changing Systems, Changing Lives

National
Collaborative
for
Implementation
Support

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. Their 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**, was joined by 19 Project Co-Leaders and Team Members whose efforts drove tremendous work across eight projects in FY25 that support implementation in state agencies and communities.



National Collaborative for Implementation Support Program Highlights in FY25:

➤ 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 58 staff members on evidence based principles for risk assessment and management in the criminal-legal system, surveyed or interviewed 50 staff about barriers and facilitators to implementation of evidence-based risk management strategies, conducted 36 observations of cognitive behavioral groups and 5 inter-rater reliability exercises of Support Center's risk-needs assessment in the field, and designed and deployed 3 new tools to

support staff in their implementation of risk management strategies. Four Support Centers requiring high intensity implementation support improved their implementation of risk-need-responsivity.

- In her work with the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections, **Dr. Michelle Crist** facilitates a Community Justice Support Center Community Advisory Board (CAB) consisting of 8 people with lived experience in the Massachusetts criminal-legal system inform the programs, policies, and practices of Support Centers across the state. Among other things, the CAB has reviewed CBT curriculum and recommendations for changes to exercises, reviewed Support Center handbooks and gave recommendations on modifying language and ways to enhance engagement, reviewed de-identified treatment plans and gave feedback on ways to improve language, and reviewed orientation processes & recognition ceremonies and gave recommendations on ways to enhance engagement with and recognition of participants in these processes
- In her work with the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Tri-City Partnership, **Jinnia Baiye** facilitates a Young Adult Advisory Board (YAAB) consisting of six members between the ages of 18–24 years of age, currently or previously living in Fitchburg, Gardner, or Leominster, who provide input on the Shannon programmatic activities, policies, and strategies of the Tri-City Partnership and communities in which they live. Among other things, the YAAB has provided feedback to community partners on youth engagement in local programming and retention, education and employment support, mental health and wellbeing support, enhancing police engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community, and the use, structure, and impact of the Individual Risk Assessment.
- In partnership with *Project Navigation, Outreach, Recovery, Treatment and Hope (NORTH): Implementation Support*, **Drs. Dara Drawbridge** and **Michelle Crist**, **Jinnia Baiye**, Emily Zitek, Joshua Rumbut, Dr. Ekaterina Pivovarova, and Alexandra Boland designed and deployed a data infrastructure for Project NORTH, provided training and resources to navigators, and produced on-going data dashboards on navigation services. 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.
- In September 2024 **Drs. Dara Drawbridge**, **Michelle Crist**, and Brian Daly were awarded a \$1.4 million dollar grant from NIJ to test the degree to which a framework from implementation science, the Evidence-based System for Innovation Support (EBSIS), improves Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) informed case management capacity, implementation, and reach among persons of color on probation. The overarching project goal is to improve implementation and reach of comprehensive, person-centered, and coordinated case management for those on probation, thereby, closing the care gap, mitigating treatment and support needs, and improving individual success in the community. Additional details of this award are in [Appendix A](#).

The Program for Clubhouse Research



The Program for Clubhouse Research (PCR) was established in 2000 to increase the quality and quantity of research on the Clubhouse Model of Psychosocial Rehabilitation. Directed by **Ms. Colleen McKay**, the PCR 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.

Program for Clubhouse Research Highlights in FY25:

- The Clubhouse Profile Questionnaire (CPQ), administered by the PCR annually, provides rich data on member outcomes and program effectiveness for mental health Clubhouses and for Brain Injury Clubhouses. It's been cited in major publications and used to inform national mental health reports.

“ The Brain Injury Clubhouse Quality Assurance committee met last Friday and loved the data compiled from the CPQ. This info really gets us excited about future possibilities and helps us go deeper into what's challenging for Clubhouses to implement the Clubhouse Standards.”

- The special issue on the Clubhouse Model in the [Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal](#) (Volume 47, Issue 3, 2024) has significantly advanced the visibility, credibility, and global understanding of the Clubhouse Model. It includes both qualitative and quantitative studies, enriching the methodological rigor of Clubhouse research. The issue features nine peer-reviewed articles that explore novel outcomes like virtual engagement, community-based participatory research, and disability assessment within Clubhouse settings. Studies span multiple countries, showcasing the model's dissemination, adaptability, and effectiveness across diverse cultural and healthcare systems.

- **Colleen McKay's** scholarship has helped bridge the gap between practice and academia to move the Clubhouse Model from a grassroots movement to a scientifically validated approach to recovery. She's also highlighted the importance of member-led research, promoting equity and inclusion by involving individuals with lived experience in study design and implementation.

“ With the large support of Colleen/The Program for Clubhouse Research, we (Clubhouse South Carolina and Clubhouse International) have been able to identify quantifiable and qualifiable data to begin collecting to support the ongoing Clubhouse expansion efforts in South Carolina. With this partnership we are able to localize data through our statewide Clubhouse Coalition, pilot replicable data collection efforts, and identify key processes for the scale of



new expansion efforts in other communities across the USA. Grassroots work combined with informed data is what revolutionizes our work and impact here in South Carolina."

“ I just wanted to say THANK YOU again for taking the time to come to the trial-run of my dissertation defense today! I really appreciate the support. Thanks for the thoughtful ideas and feedback, too. I will definitely be bulking out the ‘implications and future directions’ slides.”



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 focused on the improvement of mental health among pregnant and postpartum individuals with addiction.

Research to Optimize Women's Mental Health Highlights in FY25:

- **Dr. Kim Yonkers** was recruited to be an ex officio member of the Future of DSM committee, an APA committee that is strategizing and planning for DSM-6.
- Dr. Yonkers presented Grand Rounds at Washington University School of Medicine and University of Utah School of Medicine. The topics were: (1) Psychiatric Update on Substance Use in Pregnancy.
- **Dr. Yonkers** began her first term as the Editor-In-Chief for the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*.
- **Dr. Yonkers** and her lab continued 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. She is setting up a trial of a short term transcranial magnetic stimulation trial (SAINT) for postpartum depression. This is a multicenter trial funded by the Department of Defense.

The Substance Use and Suicide Risk Lab



The Substance Use and Suicide (SUS) lab is led by **Dr. Lourah Kelly**. Her lab focuses on the design, effectiveness testing, and implementation strategies for evidence-based practices for substance use disorders and suicide risk, particularly in partnership with adolescents, emerging adults, and their families. **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 last July of 2024, **Dr. Kelly** has published 5 manuscripts (1 as first author, 1 as anchor author) in scientific journals (see [Appendix C](#)) and has presented or is scheduled to present 9 national presentations (8 posters, 1 as first author, 2 as anchor author; 1 first author symposium), in addition to features on the [Voices of UMass Chan Podcast](#) [↗](#) and dissemination of research to broader communities through the social media accounts of the [Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences](#) [↗](#) at UMass Chan and the [Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide](#) [↗](#) (CAPES) housed at UMass Chan. Social media dissemination includes active presence on Bluesky, Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn (depending on the department or organization).

Substance Use and Suicide Risk Lab Highlights in FY25:

- ▶ In September 2023, **Dr. Lourah 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. **Dr. Kelly** recently submitted her progress report for Year 2 of the R00 phase and anticipates being awarded Year 3 in September 2025.
- ▶ 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 supported 15 travel awards to APA in 2024, and the carryover will support 15 additional travel awards in 2025, despite not yet receiving the Notice of Award for Year 2. In August 2025, **Dr. Kelly** and her Clinical Research Coordinator III, **Nancy Hu**, will award 15 travel awards to early career alcohol investigators and host the event at APA August 8–10, 2025 in collaboration with Division 50, Division 28, and NIAAA.

- **Dr. Kelly** continues to serve as Unit Lead of the Dissemination and Community Engagement Unit of the [Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide through Technology Translation](#)  (CAPES; PI: **Dr. Edwin Boudreaux**). This role involves co-facilitating monthly meetings of the CAPES Lived Experience Advisory Board 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 partners with **Jonathan Lerew**, the iSPARC Graphic Designer, to maintain and expand the CAPES website with some consultation from the Education Development Center/Zero Suicide Institute.
- **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 second annual National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science, attended by over 250 participants including researchers, persons with lived experience and advisory board members, peer recovery support specialists, and community partners.
- **Dr. Kelly** is a supervisor on an R37 Method to Extend Research in Time awarded to Dr. Sara Becker, which recently received stop work orders secondary to shifting federal priorities, highlighting the importance of continued advocacy for sustained investment in behavioral health intervention research. She now serves as a Consultant for 1-8 hours per week. In this capacity, **Dr. Kelly** moderates and responds to questions in a 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 manuscripts in peer-reviewed scientific journals, multiple poster presentations with trainees, and continued presentations and manuscripts in preparation. **Dr. Kelly** has also collaborated with Dr. Sara Becker for more than a decade, so has a long-standing history of academic and grant-funded research success with this team.

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 Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration (CIRC) Center.

Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research Highlights in FY25:



➤ Drs. Marsha Ellison and Michelle Mullen (co-PIs) were awarded the fourth round of funding for the [Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center](#) by NIDILRR, assuming leadership from retired Dr. Maryann Davis (9/2024–8/2029). The Center's three goals are to: 1) explore alternate policy pathways to promote career development outcomes; 2) conduct research & development activities to enhance human capital outcomes; and 3) translate new knowledge to innovate policy, programs, and practices.



Bachelor's degrees are increasingly needed in today's economy but college drop-out rates among young adults with SMHC are as high as 86%. Two efforts within the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research are making promising strides towards promoting success among college students with serious mental health conditions.

1. [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. Maryann Davis and colleagues developed PASS and established PASS's efficacy through research at Boston University and UMass Boston.

A project milestone was achieved in Fall 2024, marked by the completion of the final data collection for the last cohort. Preliminary results of the study were presented at the 7th International Conference on Youth Mental Health (IAYMH) 2025 in Vancouver, British Columbia, in March of 2025.

Three manuals of the PASS program were developed and finalized as part of this grant initiative during this reporting timeframe: Peer Coach Supervisor Manual, Peer Coach Manual, and the Peer Coach Workbook. From July 2023 to May 2024, the manuals were piloted with Rowan University as part of a beta-test to gather feedback on their implementation feasibility.

Paul Cherchia, the lead developer of PASS at Boston University and Co-I, provided 1) the three manuals and 2) remote weekly supervision to the Rowan Team as they beta-tested the PASS Coaching Model from July 2023 to May 2024. Rowan University ran the PASS model for two semesters on their campus. Rowan University had three peer coaches and a total of seven students who received coaching. Weekly coaching logs, student assessments, and weekly supervision notes were collected and compiled into feedback that was incorporated into the fourth and final manual, The PASS Model Implementation Manual, which was produced in November 2024. The final project analyses are currently in progress, involving detailed examination and assessment of the data to ensure accuracy.



From students who have received PASS:

“ I went from someone who almost didn’t make it out of high school, to academic probation, to graduating with honors. Now I am a graduate student pursuing my master’s degree, with the ambition of law school.”

“ My coach helped me make calendars, reminders, lists, but he also listened to me, helped me understand my behavior and make meaningful change. When my mom got really sick, I had to leave campus to care for her. I ended up with four incomplete classes. Without the help from my coach, the reminders to do my work, the check- ins, and the open line of communication, all of those incompletes would have turned into failing grades.”

2. [Focused Skill and Strategy Training](#) (FSST), an intervention featured in **Dr. Michelle Mullen’s** research portfolio, is a 12-session intervention aimed at developing 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 were completed to evaluate the feasibility and associated outcomes of FSST in two settings:

Preliminary findings from FSST at Work, where FSST is delivered digitally to young adults in work environments, showed: a) significant reductions in reported cognitive problems & increase in cognitive strategy use ($p \leq .05$) and b) significant improvements in executive function skills at three and six months and role functioning at work at 6 months ($p \leq .05$).

Preliminary findings from the HYPE (Helping Youth on the Path to Employment) on Campus project, where FSST was implemented as a part of the intervention provided by MSW students, showed that at end of the second semester, HYPE participants had fewer educational barriers ($p \leq .05$), fewer cognitive barriers ($p \leq .05$), and greater number of cognitive strategy use ($p \leq .05$). For participants who completed FSST within HYPE (as compared to those that did not), students used a greater number of self-regulated learning strategies ($p \leq .05$), completed more courses ($p \leq .05$), completed a greater number of credits ($p \leq .05$), and experienced less stress and depression ($p \leq .05$). Watch a HYPE on Campus provider discussing her work with college students with mental health conditions as a part of this study [here](#).

- Several efforts within the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research also seek to support young adults in high school. Since 2020, with funding from NIDILRR, **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** has partnered with the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health to develop and disseminate standardized implementation materials for the

bryt intervention, a school-based program to support students returning from an extended absence due to SMHC. With funding from the CIRC Center, the research team has begun assessing its acceptability and effectiveness among students from large, urban, and low-income schools, several of which have bryt programs funded by the Commonwealth of MA.

- 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](#). In the past year, both boards have facilitated several activities to increase the internal infrastructure of both boards. Several YAB members have recently let us know how much they appreciate the YAB activities. From one member:

“What meant the most to me was having a monthly space to collaborate with peers—a space where I could show up authentically, be unconditionally supported, and contribute to something bigger than myself. That space played a powerful role in my personal growth. I found the courage to share stories I'd never told before, stories I once carried shame around and when I was met with compassion, not judgment. That changed everything for me. Being a part of the YAB helped me see that my lived experience wasn't something that held me back—it was something valuable. Even the stipend played a role in that shift, affirming that I could bring real value to the marketplace by using my experiences to help organizations create thoughtful, innovative solutions for multi-system youth.”



COMMUNITY

High-impact Presentations

In FY25, iSPARC Faculty and staff gave over 150 presentations to an estimated 22,000 individuals. A select list of presentations is in [Appendix D](#).

Most presentations were peer-reviewed and national, including presentations at the Annual Meetings of the Psychological Association, Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychology-Law Society, and the National Association of Probation Executives. iSPARC faculty and staff also presented internationally, including at the International Association for Youth Mental Health, The European Clubhouse Conference, and the 40th Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability. iSPARC faculty and staff also presented to key groups within the Commonwealth, including the Massachusetts Probation Service Executive Committee, the DMH-WRCH Deaf Mental Health Symposium, and the Boston College Diversity Challenge Conference.

2025 Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference

On May 29, 2025, iSPARC and the MGH Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research co-hosted the 2025 Annual Conference of the DMH Research Centers of Excellence.

The theme of this virtual conference was [Promoting Youth Mental and Behavioral Health: Understanding and Addressing Risk and Protective Factors to Improve Youth Well-Being and Outcomes](#) [↗](#). Over 300 individuals attended the conference, including DMH staff, individuals with lived experience, family members, providers, and clinicians.

MA 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—**Dr. Gina Vincent**, UMass Chan; Dr. Cheryl Y.S. Foo, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School; Dr. Daphne Holt, Mass General Brigham & Harvard Medical School; **Dr. Michelle Mullen, PhD**, UMass Chan; and Vanessa Iroeguble, Mass General Brigham.

Presentations focused on improving the well-being of youth:

- Effective interventions for reducing youth violence
- The effects of legalizing cannabis sales on use among youth presenting for a psychiatric emergency
- Training community organizations to deliver a resilience-enhancing intervention for youth
- Enhancing the career development outcomes among young adults with mental health conditions
- Treating nicotine dependence in youth by integrating pharmacotherapy & CBT strategies for vaping cessation.

Each presentation included videos that highlighted the real-world impact of the different projects on the well-being of youth and young adults.

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



2025 ANNUAL Research Centers of Excellence Conference

Promoting Youth Mental and Behavioral Health

Understanding and Addressing Risk and Protective Factors to Improve Youth Well-Being and Outcomes



Thursday
May 29, 2025



12:30 –
4:30 PM EDT



Zoom
Meeting

Featured Speakers



Gina
Vincent, PhD
UMass Chan
Medical School



Cheryl Y. S.
Foo, PhD
Mass General Brigham &
Harvard Medical School



Daphne
Holt, MD, PhD
Mass General Brigham &
Harvard Medical School



Michelle
Mullen, PhD
UMass Chan
Medical School



Vanessa
Iroegbulem, BA
Mass General Brigham

With opening remarks by Brooke Doyle, Commissioner of Mass DMH.
Perspectives of people with lived experience will be included.

Register

<https://umassmed.zoom.us/meeting/register/Ko0Fga0QRyuHlZLnxiHWrQ>

See the full agenda on our website:

https://www.umassmed.edu/sparc/about-our-center/DMH_Conference/



UMass Chan
MEDICAL SCHOOL



Massachusetts General Hospital
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham



Center of Excellence
for Psychosocial and Systemic Research

CMEs for physicians and CEUs for Psychology, RN, Social Work, OT, and LMHC are available. ASL interpreter services will be provided.

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 FY25. Tasked with overseeing social media, websites, publications, webinars, podcasts, videos, and all other dissemination activities, the Communications Program is the engine behind iSPARC’s knowledge translation efforts. The team has designed innovative, multi-platform dissemination strategies that ensure our research doesn’t just sit on a shelf—it moves swiftly into practice, where it can make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.



The Communications Program works across every channel to make our work accessible, relatable, and actionable. At its core, the Program’s mission is clear: accelerate the adoption of evidence-based practices by bridging the gap between research and real-world application.

This powerhouse team includes:

- **Robin Tasca**, who expertly manages five iSPARC-affiliated websites and drives our social media presence.
- **Jonathan Lerew**, our creative lead for graphic design, CAPES website content, and video production.
- **Mei Pearlstein**, producer and editor of the S.T.A.Y. Tuned Podcast and video content creator.
- **Gillian Simons**, who supports the S.T.A.Y. Tuned Podcast and leads iSPARC's new Blog initiative.

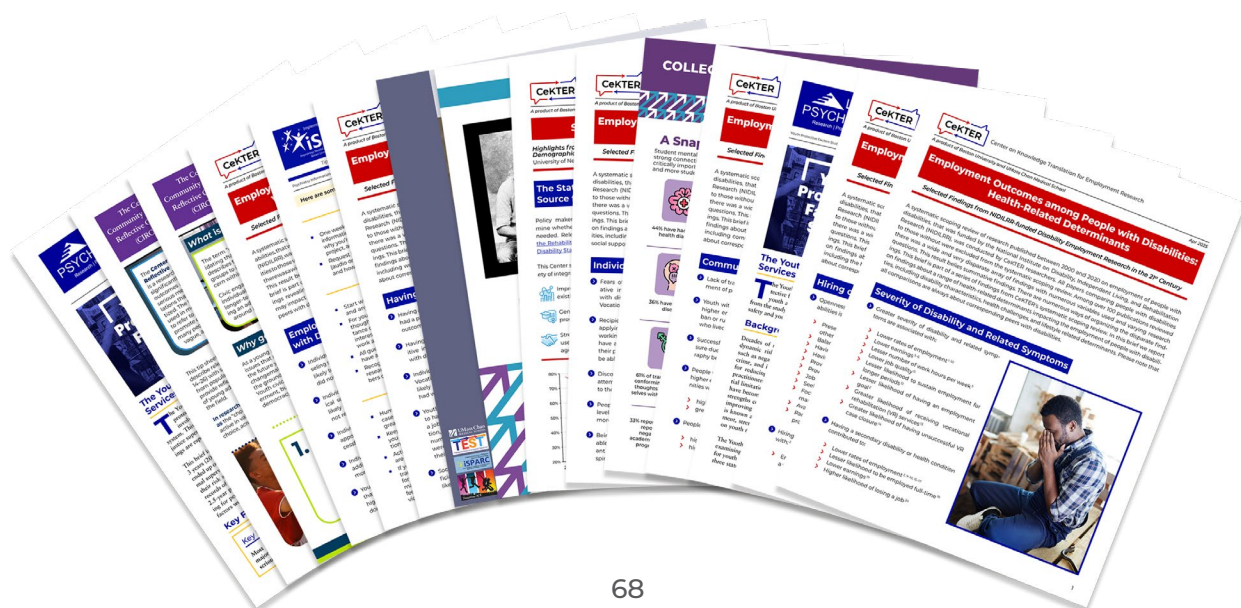
Together, they are making sure our research reaches the people who need it most, in ways that are timely, impactful, and resonant.

FY25 Communications Program Highlights

New Written Products

iSPARC published 15 new written products (2 manuals, 1 infographic and 12 tip sheets/briefs) in FY25. See [Appendix B](#) for the full list. The top 3 most downloaded are:

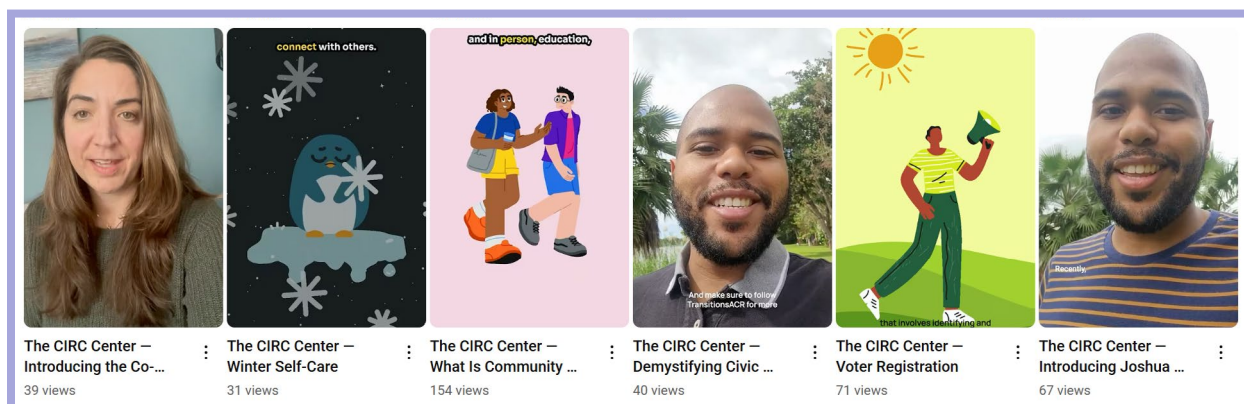
- My “Must Have” Papers [English and Spanish versions] — 3,108 downloads
- Lifeline for Moms Perinatal Mental Health Toolkit — 2,164 downloads
- Emotional Support Animals: The Basics [English and Spanish versions] — 1,805 downloads



New Blog Project

In FY25, the Center for Community Inclusion and Reflective Collaboration (CIRC Center) embarked on a new blog project. Building upon successful blogs from the Learning & Working RRTC, the [Blogging on Adulthood: In Our Voice](#) [↗](#) offers a platform for authentic storytelling by and for young adults aged 18–34. Our Bloggers share and draw from their real-life journeys with lived experience. Each year, the CIRC Center will work with young adults with lived experience to produce blogs. This year, three members of our Young Adult Advisory Board collaborated with **Gillian Simons** to author compelling new blog posts, which were published on the [Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's website](#) [↗](#). See [Appendix B](#) for the listing and links to the blogs.

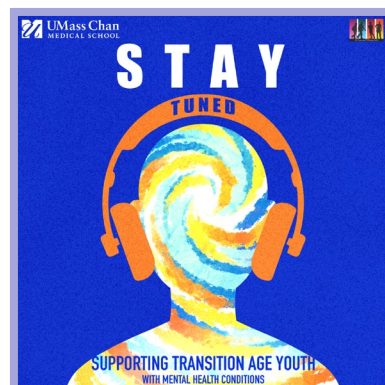
New Short Video Projects



Recognizing the need for concise, engaging content, The CIRC Center and the Learning & Working RRTC each launched short video projects aimed at young adults while also engaging parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers. The 60–90 second videos are shared on the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's social media channels (YouTube, Facebook, X, Bluesky and Instagram) as well as iSPARC's LinkedIn. These projects are co-led by young adult staff members **Jonathan Lerew** and **Mei Pearlstein**, who, alongside an iSPARC Young Adult Advisory Board member, collaboratively select topics, develop scripts, and produce the videos. The videos are housed on the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's [YouTube Channel](#) [↗](#).

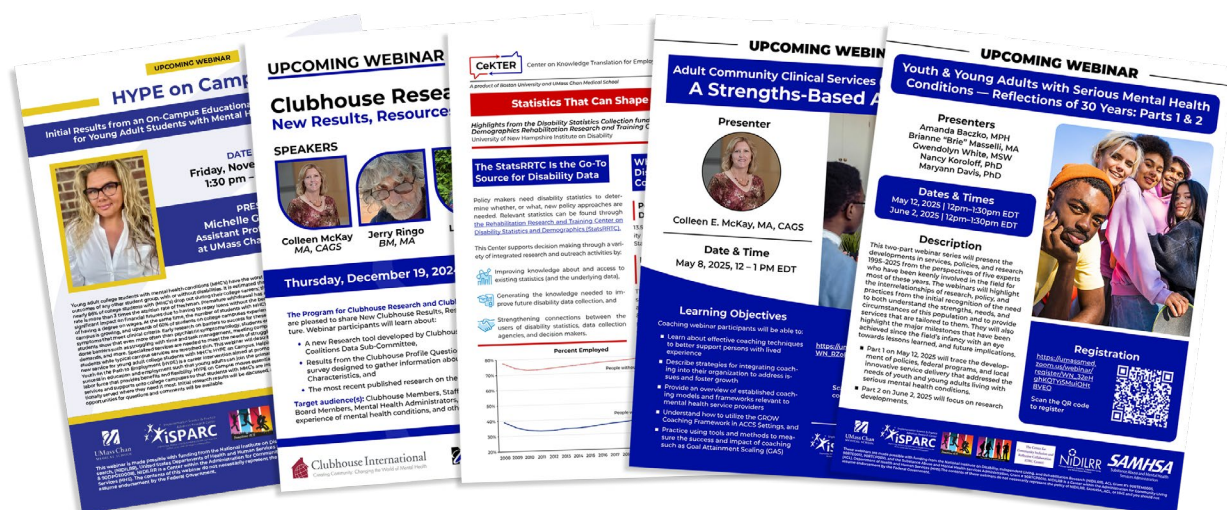
Expanding the S.T.A.Y. Tuned Podcast

The [S.T.A.Y. Tuned: Supporting Transition-Age Youth Podcast](#) [↗](#), produced by the Learning & Working RRTC and The CIRC Center, continues to serve as a vital platform for young adults with mental health conditions. Co-led by **Mei Pearlstein** and **Gillian Simons**, the podcast features stories, insights, and practical information from both youth and expert collaborators worldwide. In FY25, the team



released six new episodes, addressing topics that resonate with young adults managing their mental health while pursuing education and employment. Six episodes were published in FY25 with more to come in the next fiscal year. See [Appendix B](#) for the listing and links to these episodes.

Delivering Impactful Webinars



This year, iSPARC hosted six webinars that highlighted innovative research, new interventions, and data-driven insights:

- **Dr. Michelle Mullen and Debbie Nicoletlis** presented “[HYPER on Campus: Initial Results from an Educational Support Intervention for Young Adult Students with Mental Health Conditions](#)” for the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research. This webinar described a new service for young adult college students with mental health conditions—“HYPER on Campus”. “HYPER on Campus” develops critical skills, such as those related to executive functioning, so that students can meet the competing demands and more effectively utilize resources on campus. Initial research results will be discussed with opportunities for questions and comments.
- **Colleen McKay and Clubhouse International** collaborated on the webinar “[Clubhouse Research: New Results, Resources, and Literature](#)” where they presented on a new research tool developed by Clubhouse International’s Coalitions Data Sub-Committee; results from the Clubhouse Profile Questionnaire—an annual survey designed to gather information about Clubhouse Characteristics; and the most recent published research on the Clubhouse Model.
- The Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (CeKTER) collaborated with the NIDILRR-funded Disability Statistics and Demographics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (StatsRRTC) at the University of New Hampshire to present “[Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy](#)” that highlights from

StatsRRTC's Disability Statistics Collection, including data on disability employment rates in rural America and among Black Americans with disabilities.

- The iSPARC TA Program presented the webinar “[ACCS Coaching: A Strengths-Based Approach](#)” that focused on developing a coaching structure for Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) agencies to ensure that all evidence-based programs (e.g., Motivational interviewing) and practices (e.g., completion of valid screens and assessments, integrating information from assessments into treatment plans) are accompanied by a coaching model, especially for new hires and new practices.
- The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research held a two-part webinar series, “[Youth & Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions—Reflections on 30 Years](#)” that presented the developments in services, policies, and research from 1995–2025 from the perspectives of five experts who have been keenly involved in the field for most of these years.

Enhancing Digital Accessibility & Expanding Our Web Presence

Our commitment to inclusivity drove comprehensive accessibility upgrades across all web platforms, ensuring our resources are usable by individuals of all abilities. Key FY25 web initiatives included:

- Launch of a [new website for the Law & Psychiatry Program](#).
- A significant update of the [Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research](#) (CeKTER) website.
- Ongoing content updates and accessibility improvements to the [iSPARC](#), [Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research](#), and [HYPE](#) websites, which will continue in FY26.



FY25 By the Numbers



iSPARC published **15** new written products (see [Appendix B](#)).



9,713 individuals are subscribed to iSPARC email lists.



iSPARC websites had **79,176** visits from **66,939** unique users with **122,114** page views. *Please note that there was a tracking failure to all websites from the last week of Nov. 2024 through Dec. 2024.*



More than **47,000** dissemination products were downloaded from iSPARC websites and e-journals.



Our videos on YouTube have had **21,368** views. **13,572** of these views are from our American Sign Language videos (on iSPARC and DeafYes! YouTube Channels).



iSPARC had **5,112** Facebook followers across our different accounts.



Our X (formerly Twitter) pages had **2,104** followers.



Our LinkedIn page had **1,594** followers, an increase of almost 700 followers from FY24.



Our Instagram accounts had **657** followers.



Our Bluesky Social pages had **66** followers (new as of January 2025).

Community Engagement Program

In FY25, the Community Engagement Program was co-led by **Dr. Melissa Anderson** and **Holly St. Jean**. Partnerships with persons with lived mental health experience, their family members, and the providers who serve them are critical to all phases of iSPARC research, training, and dissemination. Engagement is mostly achieved through 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—all boards that the Community Engagement Program provides support to.

iSPARC Advisory Boards

weSPARC Insight

The weSPARC Insight Advisory Board is comprised of up to 10 adults across the lifespan with lived mental health experience. The board is co-facilitated by **Dr. Melissa Anderson** and **Carolyn Friedhoff**. 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 FY25. During these meetings, iSPARC researchers presented their work to the board to receive feedback and guidance (e.g., **Colleen McKay**, **Dr. Martha Zimmerman**,



and Dr. Shaobing Su). Additionally, the board focused on 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 movement, recognizing that movement can take many forms. Movement can be a form of resistance and a way to improve your mood, mental health, endurance, growth, and learning. The board developed a tip sheet that provides critical guidance to researchers who seek consultation and feedback from advisory boards comprised of community members. The tip sheet, [Guidance for Researchers Visiting a Community Advisory Board](#) [🔗](#), outlines concrete "do's" and "don'ts" that researchers can apply before, during, and after the consultation. This guidance was directly informed by the lived experiences of community members—the successes and challenges they have witnessed as researchers seek their input.

Family Advisory Board



Housed within the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, the Family Advisory Board (FAB) was co-facilitated across FY25 by **Jean Wnuk** and **Vanessa Mitchell-Wagner**, and Sara Rolley, a member of the board. The board is comprised of a diverse group of 13 parents, guardians, and/or caregivers from across the country who have experience caring for young adults with lived experience of serious mental health conditions. The board meets monthly to advise and provide a family perspective on research and communications activities within the Center. During FY25, the FAB spent time revisiting their mission and membership eligibility to more broadly include people in care-taking roles irrespective of the family connection, such as a sibling or grandparent, as long as they are in a care-taking role as described in their mission. FAB members also engaged in an exercise to align their shared values and revised their Comfort Clause as needed to match these values.

Over the past year, the FAB met 10 times to provide feedback on The Learning & Working RRTC, The CIRC Center, MA DMH, and other projects that involve youth and young adults with mental health conditions. Examples of topics presented at FAB meetings:

- How to appropriately recruit for a research project that aims to improve the development and testing of an intervention to help high school students return to school after a leave of absence.

- FAB members' thoughts on current, and needed, services and supports related to employment and education for young adults with serious mental health conditions.
- Reviewing the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's website to provide feedback on useability.
- Sharing the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research's resources to glean which would be most helpful to share with their family members and which they would like to see developed.
- Feedback on how healthcare providers can support young adults and families of young adults with serious mental illness and neurodevelopmental disabilities in engaging in community participation to inform a CIRC Center training program curriculum.

Young Adult Advisory Board

Housed within the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, the Young Adult Advisory Board (YAB) is co-facilitated by Tracy Neville and Mei Pearlstein. It is comprised of 14 diverse young adults from around the United States, all of whom identify as having experience of serious mental health conditions. In FY25, YAB co-facilitators spearheaded several process improvements to enhance administrative efficiency and quality engagement of members. Activities included developing a logic model workshop spanning multiple sessions to go through with the members, revisiting the values shared by the YAB and synthesizing them into an updated values and community guidelines document, co-writing a problem and solution statement which is the problem they are trying to solve and the ways the YAB addresses that problem, and making improvements to the presenter intake process.

Several YAB members have taken on additional roles within CIRC Center projects including contracted positions such as co-investigators, research interviewers, data analysts, social media content creators, blog writers, and podcast guests. Integrating YAB members into research and dissemination teams required significant preparation, clearly defined roles and expectations, and in-depth onboarding requirements. Through these new roles, the CIRC Center strives to expand shared leadership



opportunities with young adults, develop inclusive and collaborative working partnerships, and empower both YAB members and the audiences we aim to reach.

In FY25, YAB members met 12 times to provide feedback on the L&W RRTC, The CIRC Center, MA DMH, and other projects that involve youth and young adults with mental health conditions. Examples of some of the work accomplished by the YAB both in and outside of these monthly meetings include:

- Three YAB members presented alongside CIRC Center researchers (**Drs. Kathryn Sabella** and Alicia Lucksted) at the 2025 Annual NARRTC conference in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia.
- Providing feedback on avatar design, readability of the content, and suggested printable worksheets for users on recovery resources for **Dr. Lourah Kelly's** NIH-funded R00 avatar-guided mobile health intervention for emerging adults with alcohol misuse and suicidality.
- Participating in a “Research 101” training on the fundamentals of research led by **Dr. Kathryn Sabella**.
- Providing feedback on and participating in the implementation of CIRC Center research, training, and dissemination projects.
- Sharing their perceptions and experiences in the gig economy for a project in the new L&W RRTC.
- YAB members serving as co-investigators led presentations and facilitated follow-up discussions with their fellow YAB members.
- Aiding in the development of a civic engagement workshop led by Dr. Barbara Ferman and Ieshia Nelson, training young adults with serious mental health conditions to take action on social, economic, and political issues.

Lifeline for Moms Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council



Housed within the Lifeline for Families Research Program, the Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council continues to play a vital role in shaping research with the insights of those who have lived through perinatal mental health challenges. Co-facilitated by **Dee Logan** and council member **Chahdael Foreman**, the Council was made up of 13 diverse individuals with firsthand experience of mental health conditions during the perinatal period.

In FY25, the Council convened 6 times to provide thoughtful, experience-informed feedback on a range of research initiatives. Their contributions helped ensure that projects center the needs and voices of perinatal individuals. Highlights of this year's engagement include:

- Shaping the engagement plan and generating search terms for the scoping review of the PCORI-funded Engage Initiative.
- Contributing to the PCORI-funded *Pathways* project's Measures Work Group by helping select evaluation tools.
- Weighing in on qualitative findings from patient participants in the CDC-funded *Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs: Evaluating Patient, Provider, and Program Level Outcomes Across the US* study.
- Offering insight into how the *Pathways* project can train obstetric practices in equitable, trauma-informed care and providing guidance on informed consent materials for the patient focus groups.
- Celebrating a major milestone: Chahdael Foreman's abstract on Council-developed Journey Maps was accepted for presentation at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting in November 2025.

By centering lived experience, the Council continues to strengthen the relevance, equity, and impact of perinatal mental health research across the country.

The FAB, YAB, and Postpartum Mental Health Advisory Council are all part of a PCORI-funded Advancing the Science of Engagement award, entitled "The Engage Initiative." The goal of that study is to advance the meaningful engagement of populations underrepresented in patient-centered outcomes research/community-engaged research (PCOR/CER) related to mental health.

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 undergo 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. FY25 results are summarized in the infographic below.



Based on FY25 PAR-PAT results, the Community Engagement team identified that iSPARC investigators could benefit from additional support with involving their community of focus in peer-reviewed publication efforts—seeking collaboration to write article sections and even lead article development. The team provided an iSPARC-IL to the Center on this topic in May 2025 and will publish a tip sheet on the same topic in FY26. Additionally, the Community Engagement Program will continue to provide coaching and consultation in these areas of growth across FY26.

Workforce Enrichment Program

The Workforce Enrichment Program supports several overlapping and ongoing initiatives to support professional development of staff and faculty, improve workplace culture, and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

In FY25, we initiated a new iSPARC DEI committee. This committee, comprising several staff and faculty members working together, is led by our new DEI lead, **Mei Pearlstein**. The group had their inaugural meeting in January 2025 and met 6 times. We receive consultation from the UMass Chan Diversity and Inclusion Office on these initiatives.

Based on findings from the Diversity and Engagement Survey in FY24, the group identified several initiatives to begin their work on:

Assessment

- Conduct an annual diversity assessment of the iSPARC workforce.
- Assist the iSPARC Community Engaged Advisory Groups in assessing and/or improving board diversity as well as assisting with board member recruitment as needed.

Hiring and Recruitment

- Assist with implementation of equitable hiring practices and diversifying our recruitment pool.
- Creation of a pipeline program, creating opportunities and educational experiences for students within behavioral health research to inspire future careers within the field.

Trainings

- Identify DEI training gaps across iSPARC and determine a list of feasible trainings to offer to iSPARC faculty and staff.

Community Engagement

- Design initiatives to engage with Worcester youth and young adults from marginalized and or underrepresented backgrounds within academia, leveraging iSPARC resources to improve social determinants of health for the local community.

Research Practices

- Identify areas within the research life cycle where DEI methodology could be implemented to combat colonialist and Euro-centric, non-inclusive norms for academic research.

From the several initiatives identified, subcommittees have been identified and have begun meeting to work towards hiring and training objectives.

Hiring and Recruitment: iSPARC is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce. In FY25, we developed the following goals: 1) we will share iSPARC job opportunities on a variety of job boards to potentially increase applications from more diverse applicants, and 2) we will develop a set of best practices and materials to standardize the hiring process and limit implicit bias during the interview process.

Trainings: We began an assessment of what trainings have been previously offered and what trainings are desired to begin identifying future trainings that are of interest to iSPARC. All trainings will be optional. We hope to begin training implementation in FY26.

Relatedly, we've begun planning a pipeline program to bring in youth and young adults from Worcester public schools into iSPARC internships. These internships would aim to educate students on social behavioral research careers and bring opportunities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Two opportunities are being pursued:

- Exploring the possibility of collaborating with UMass Chan's Worcester Pipeline Initiative to co-create an internship program.
- Establish a volunteer program for faculty and staff to deliver in person workshops and educational opportunities to students within Worcester Public Schools.

Workforce Development Program

Based on feedback received during the 2023 iSPARC Retreat, we have combined Faculty Development and Staff Development into Workforce Development. The 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.

New iSPARC Faculty



Sarah Palmer, MD, joined iSPARC in FY25. She is an Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at UMass Chan Medical School and is a Neuropsychiatry Fellow at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center. Her clinical home is the Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders. **Dr. Palmer** is a Massachusetts Psychiatric Society representative to the American Psychiatric Association.

A focus on advocacy and development drives **Dr. Palmer's** academic and clinical efforts. She was awarded the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Pilot Research Award for Early Career Faculty and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows to complete a qualitative analysis titled, *Early Intervention: Understanding Attachment and Attrition*.

Trainees

In March 2025, two of **Dr. Nancy Byatt's** trainees, **Drs. Esther Boama-Nyarko and Clevanne Julce**, successfully defended their doctoral dissertations and completed their PhDs in the UMass Chan Morningside Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Population Health Sciences Program.



Esther Boama-Nyarko, PhD, earned her Master of Public Health from Boston University where she focused on continuous quality improvement, frontline provider training and engagement, implementation science and suicide prevention within health care settings. **Dr. Boama-Nyarko's** dissertation focused on *Elucidating the Mechanisms Driving Adverse Outcomes in Racialized Perinatal Populations*. Her research interests include perinatal mental health—specifically understanding the impact of structural racism on mental health and mortality outcomes in racialized perinatal individuals, like Black women. She is also interested in research that includes allostatic load and community-engaged research. Prior to joining the Lifeline for Families team, **Dr. Boama-Nyarko** was a clinical research coordinator in the UMass Chan Department of Emergency Medicine, where she focused on suicide prevention within healthcare settings, including training, clinician engagement, and quality involvement.



Clevanne (Cle) Julce, PhD, earned her Master of Public Health from Boston University. For more than 7 years, she worked as a project manager for the Preconception Care Team at Boston University Medical Center. There, **Dr. Julce** oversaw several federally funded domestic and international grant research portfolios. Under **Dr. Byatt's** direction, **Dr. Julce's** primary research focus was to use a mixed-methods approach to investigate the intersection between preconception mental health care delivery, implementation science and innovative technologies. Her dissertation examined *Factors Contributing to Psychiatric Medication Use in Pregnancy: A Preconception Perspective*. **Dr. Julce** received the Dean's Award for Outstanding Student Mentor in the Classroom or Research Setting and was selected by her peers as Class Speaker at graduation. She joined Lifeline for Families as a Postdoctoral Fellow in June 2025.

Former Postdoctoral Fellows

Hannah Seward, PhD, completed her postdoctoral fellowship training in the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research in Fall 2024. She has since moved on to become a Postdoctoral Researcher with the Kansas University Center on Disabilities at the University of Kansas.

Nana Marfo, PhD, completed her postdoctoral fellowship at iSPARC in January 2025 and is now a licensed clinical psychologist.

Staff Development and Promotions

Staff development is supported by Paula Silverman. Staff meet regularly (once every two months) to discuss issues of importance to them and training opportunities. Ms. Silverman also provides support to supervisors annually during staff Annual Performance Reviews. iSPARC is invested in supporting the professional advancement of staff and in their pursuit of additional education or training. In FY25:

- **Samantha Hersh** was promoted from Research Coordinator I to Research Coordinator II
- **Hanaan Osman** was promoted from Clinical Research Coordinator I to Clinical Research Coordinator II
- **Holly St. Jean** was promoted from Project Manager I to Project Manager II
- **Jennifer Pendleton** was promoted from Research Coordinator I to Research Coordinator II
- **Karlie Rice** was promoted from Clinical Research Coordinator II to Sr. Clinical Research Coordinator

- In July 2024, **Maya Ingram**, Research Project Director, left iSPARC to pursue her Master's in Social Work at Boston College. **Maya** began as a community advisor before joining iSPARC as a Research Coordinator in 2021.
- **Samantha Hersh** continues to work in iSPARC while pursuing an MPH at the American College of Education.
- Several research staff left iSPARC recently to pursue graduate programs full-time
 - **Karlie Rice**, formally of Law and Psychiatry, is pursuing a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Montclair University with a focus on forensic psychology.
 - **Janelle LaPlante**, formally of National Collaboration on Implementation Center is pursuing a doctorate in Psychology at the University of New Hampshire-Durham.
 - **Kayla Carew**, formally of Law and Psychiatry, is pursuing a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Fordham University.

Other Professional Development Activities

Our hallmark Professional Development learning series, iSPARC-ILs (iSPARC - Interactive Learning) continued through FY25 under the guide of **Dr. Lourah Kelly**. iSPARC-ILs promote learning opportunities for all iSPARC faculty and staff on various research topics related to our extensive portfolio of work. The format is totally flexible, but in general, iSPARC-IL presenters ideally present an overview of their area of expertise or talk about a specific project or expertise and facilitate some discussion around this topic. iSPARC-ILs also can be used as a platform for senior staff and junior faculty to present some of their work and get feedback in a supportive environment.

The following iSPARC-ILs were held in FY25:

- September 2024: **Dr. Michelle Mullen** presented the preliminary findings from the HYPE on Campus (HOC) research study and the results from the HOC Community webinar they hosted.
- October 2024: **Nancy Hu** presented "Sharing Out Learning from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Research Training."
- November 2024: **Dr. Maria Karekla**, a licensed clinical psychologist and Associate Professor from the University of Cyprus, presented on "Can we achieve alleviation of suffering? Digitally moving towards the future of mental healthcare."

- January 2025: Dr. Jonathan Delman, Director of Behavioral Health Research Solutions (BHRS) presented on Applying the Principles of Continuous Quality Improvement to Behavioral Health Agencies: Advantages and Challenges.
- February 2025: **Robin Tasca**, Communications Specialist, presented “Getting Social with LinkedIn” where she outlined how to maximize your LinkedIn profile, the best practices for creating posts, and highlight platform features available to promote thought leadership.
- April 2025: **Dr. Alexander Wilkins** presented “Utilizing a Community Engaged Approach to Develop a Deaf-friendly Adaptation of Motivational Enhancement Therapy” where he shared the various community engagement methods that his team used to adapt Motivational Enhancement Therapy for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. He discussed the adaptation process, findings from their qualitative interviews, their final materials, their challenges/successes, and the next steps in the project.
- May 2025: **Dr. Melissa Anderson, Holly St. Jean, and Mary Quill** from the Community Engagement Program presented “Community Engaged Article Writing” where they spoke about tips on how to engage your community of choice on article writing and they shared the results from last year’s PAR-PAT.
- June 2025: **Drs. Shaobing Su and Xihan Yang** presented “Community-Based Participatory Research on Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation and Child Development.”

Program to Increase and Diversify External Funding

The new iSPARC Program to Increase and Diversify External Funding was established during FY25 and is led by **Drs. Megan Kelly** and **Kathryn Sabella**. This program had previously been part of the Faculty Development Program and during FY25 was developed into a separate program to differentiate it from professional development activities.

The aims of this program are to increase the chances of iSPARC faculty members' successfully obtaining funding for their programs of research, to build dissemination platforms, and train community providers and organizations. The main activities of this program are the Grant Submission Support and Grant Review and building an infrastructure for more diverse technical assistance and training contracts. These activities are described below.

iSPARC Grant Support Team

During FY25, 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 FY25 included **Drs. William McIlvane**, **Stephenie Lemon**, **Kathryn Sabella**, **Bo Wang**, **Shaobing Su**, and **Radley C. Sheldrick** and **Ms. 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 FY25, the Grant Support Team reviewed 6 grant proposals across 9 meetings. FY25 proposals reviewed by the Grant Support Team include:

Under Review

- Family Strengthening Intervention for Separated-Reunited Families (FSI-SRF): Contextual and cultural adaptation — **NIH R21 — Dr. Shaobing Su**

- An Investigation of Sex 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**

Not Funded

- Adapting the Evidence-based Mental Health Clubhouse Model to Meet the Needs of Individuals with Brain Injury — NIDILRR Development FIRG — **Colleen McKay**
- Leveraging Motivational Interviewing in Initial Encounters — NIMH R34 — **Dr. Marsha Ellison**
- Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation and Child Mental Health Disparities: Longitudinal Pathways and Risk/Resilience Mechanisms — NIH R01 — **Dr. Shaobing Su**

Not Yet Submitted

- Vital Signs — NIH R01 — **Dr. Melissa Anderson**

Building a Community Training Infrastructure

iSPARC is committed to disseminating the evidence-based practices in behavioral health that we have developed and evaluate. A robust training infrastructure is essential for enhancing the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of behavioral health services. At the individual level, we aim to train providers to build their competencies in evidence-based practices, enhance their cultural responsiveness, and promote their professional development. iSPARC also conducts organizational training, which focuses on embedding knowledge and practices at the systems level, as well as supporting implementation of evidence-based practices in behavioral health in a sustainable way. In FY25, we took initial steps to explore the development of a training center infrastructure for iSPARC faculty and staff to support the dissemination of their evidence-based models and interventions to the community. In FY26, we will continue to pursue these opportunities, building on the training work of our established staff and faculty.

Fulfillment of the DMH Contract

Fiscal Year 2026 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 2025:

Performance Measure	FY23	FY24	FY25
Number of ongoing research projects ¹	42	55	43
Number of grants submitted ²	21	29	17
Number of grants approved for funding ³	11	10	8

1. The number of ongoing iSPARC research projects during the fiscal year.
2. 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.
3. 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 2025 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 & Behavioral Sciences, and UMass Chan Medical School).

Performance Measure	FY23	FY24	FY25
External funding obtained	\$11,346,921	\$15,445,962	\$26,751,598

Peer Reviewed Publications

In FY25, iSPARC faculty and staff submitted, resubmitted and/or published a total of 225 manuscripts intended for 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	FY23	FY24	FY25
Number of papers submitted & accepted for publication ⁴	177	163	150

Other Dissemination Efforts

iSPARC continued to conduct trainings and give presentations at a wide variety of venues throughout FY25. 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	FY23	FY24	FY25
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	64	33	37
Estimated number of state and provider workforce members, individuals with lived experience and family members with whom research information was shared ⁵	2,593	1,251	1,848

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

5. This represents the number of individuals attending iSPARC faculty and staff presentations at conferences, webinars, and trainings in Massachusetts during FY25. 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: Assessing Delays in Parole Release

PI: Gina Vicent, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Probation Service

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$143,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2024–06/30/2025

Description: This is a research project done in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board and Massachusetts Department of Corrections to examine the length of time to parole release, causes of delays in release, and implementation of cross-agency solutions to reduce delays.

Title: Improving Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice in Parole

PI: Gina Vicent, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$200,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2024–06/30/2025

Description: This is a training and technical assistance project to implement procedures that enhance use of evidence-based practices (i.e., risk-need-responsivity) in Parole Board decision-making and parole practices.

Title: Juvenile Diversion Lab Technical Assistance Project

PI: Gina Vincent, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Youth Services

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$75,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2024–06/30/2025

Description: This is a training and technical assistance project to assist the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services in the quality of their mental health screening, risk/needs for reoffending, and case planning practices with youth receiving pre-file diversion in Massachusetts.

Title: Delivering Statewide Suicide Prevention Training with the MA Deaf Community

PIs: Melissa L. Anderson, PhD

Funder: Deaf, Inc.

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$100,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2024–06/30/2029

Description: This five-year grant will address health care access disparities in the Massachusetts Deaf adult and older Deaf adult populations. The team will do this by focusing on and documenting the inequities often experienced by Deaf adults related to effective communication with healthcare providers that impacts health outcomes.

Title: Early Intervention: Understanding Attachment and Attrition

PI: Sarah Palmer, MD

Funder: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry’s Pilot Research Award for Early Career Faculty and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows Award

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$15,000

Time Frame: 08/01/2024–10/31/2026

Description: This funding supports an exploratory qualitative study to better understand the barriers and facilitators to family engagement with Early Intervention, a federally funded developmental service provided to children aged 0-3 years old who either are diagnosed with developmental delay or are at risk of having developmental delay. We are working to understand how the relationships or “attachment” between caregivers, service providers, and children can support engagement in services as we work to develop an intervention that will increase service utilization and access to developmental supports for children and families.

Title: Exploring Sustained Implementation and Fidelity of an Evidence-based HIV Prevention Program

PI: Bo Wang, PhD, MD

Funder: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$418,929

Time Frame: 08/12/2024–07/31/2026

Description: The Bahamas has responded to its formerly high rates of HIV infections with a broad and aggressive HIV/AIDS prevention program including children in the school system. We have worked with them to develop and test the effectiveness of one such HIV prevention program (FOYC+CImPACT) among grade six students. The grade six program was shown to be very effective through a study that followed the students for three years after they had received the training. Therefore, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of The Bahamas decided to mandate the use of FOYC+CImPACT throughout all government grade six classes in The Bahamas. Over the past decade, the research team partnered with the Bahamian Ministries of Education and Health to utilize two national implementation programs to study teachers’ fidelity of implementation and theory-driven implementation strategies to increase teachers’ continued implementation of evidence-based interventions. Our decade-long nationwide implementation research provides a unique opportunity to investigate the trajectories and determinants of sustainability for HIV behavioral interventions. This study will provide valuable information to all countries and communities struggling to prevent their youth from becoming infected with HIV and doing so in a manner the country/community can afford to sustain. This information will also answer questions about maintaining the effectiveness over time of other prevention programs that are incorporated into school curricula.

Title: Optimizing Mobile Interventions to Overcome Stigma and Promote HIV Prevention among Thai Emerging Adults

PI: Bo Wang, PhD, MD

Funder: National Institute of Mental Health

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$664,382

Time Frame: 08/15/2024–08/14/2027

Description: Young transgender women (TGW) in Thailand face widespread stigma and discrimination. This discrimination may result from multiple marginalized identities including gender and sexual identity and perception of HIV status. “Intersectional stigma” may be one key barrier to HIV prevention and care (PrEP use, HIV testing). This project will develop and test a technology-delivered program designed to reduce HIV-related stigma and improve the use of HIV prevention services. If successful, the program could help young TGW in Thailand to live healthier lives and reduce risk for HIV.

Title: Disseminating “Vital Signs”: Deaf Community-Engaged Outreach to Improve Healthcare Access

PIs: Melissa L. Anderson, PhD

Funder: Remillard Family Trust/UMass Chan Medical School

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$8,000

Time Frame: 09/01/2024–09/30/2025

Description: To begin to rectify mistrust and underrepresentation in our nation’s healthcare system, our Deaf-led, Deaf-engaged research team produced a healthcare provider training film – [Vital Signs: Healthcare Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients](#) . This first-of-its-kind film was developed via a three-year collaboration between the local Deaf community and our DeafYES Center, housed within the UMass Chan Medical School Department of Psychiatry. The film, released online in January 2024, has already generated high levels of enthusiasm and support from the Massachusetts Deaf community through “word-of-mouth” dissemination. Here, we proposed further dissemination of our film via live community outreach events. We partnered Deaf community agencies with local academic medical centers as event co-hosts, to help support new community-academic collaborations and begin to address long-standing mistrust.

Title: Administrative Supplement to “Evaluating Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Therapy Toolkit for AUD and Trauma”

PIs: Melissa L. Anderson, PhD

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

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$282,988

Time Frame: 09/01/2024–08/31/2028

Description: The goal of this administrative supplement is to enhance the capacity of the Signs of Safety R01 to engage individuals from the DeafBlind community—both as research participants and as members of the research team.

Title: The Learning & Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research & Training Center

PI: Marsha Ellison, PhD and Michelle Mullen, PhD

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

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$4,374,999

Time Frame: 09/01/2024–08/31/2029

Description: The Learning & Working During the Transition to Adulthood, Rehabilitation Research, and Training Center (Learning & Working RRTC) is a national effort that aims to improve the supports for youth and young adults, ages 14–25, with serious mental health conditions to successfully complete their schooling and training and move into rewarding work lives.

The Center's three goals:

- Explore alternate policy pathways to promote career development outcomes
- Conduct research & development activities to enhance human capital outcomes
- Translate new knowledge to innovate policy, programs, and practices

These goals will drive all activities in the Learning & Working RRTC to beneficially impact young adults with serious mental health conditions. The Learning & Working RRTC focuses on the most critical career development issues facing youth and young adults to generate new knowledge and rapidly move research to practice by leveraging our deep expertise in interventions, research and development, and knowledge translation.

Over the next five years, the Learning & Working RRTC will conduct five research projects, technical assistance projects, training projects, and dissemination projects.

Title: A Type I Hybrid Effectiveness-Implementation Trial of "Mothering from the Inside Out" (MIO)

PIs: Nancy Byatt, DO, MS, MBA

Funder: National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$3,340,591 (\$114,500 direct; \$77,275 indirect)

Time Frame: 09/30/2024–07/31/2029

Description: Mothers with substance use disorders face unprecedented stress in their roles as parents working to care for their children while maintaining healthy recovery. Mothering from the Inside Out (MIO) is the first attachment-based parenting intervention designed specifically for mothers in recovery from substance use disorders that has been shown to have bigenerational benefit in multiple randomized controlled trials. This project will: (a) test the effectiveness of MIO among women in outpatient addiction treatment under 'real-world' conditions, (b) further elucidate the MIO mechanism of change associated with improvements in caregiver behavior and maternal mental health outcomes, and (c) assess key implementation constructs to support optimal uptake and treatment in future dissemination studies; closing an important science-to-service gap for an underserved population in an effort to support maternal and child health simultaneously.

Title: Environmental Scan for Youth Violence Prevention Programs

PI: Gina Vincent, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$163,000

Time Frame: 10/01/2024–09/30/2025

Description: This is an inter-agency collaboration to identify, recommend, and assist with the widespread implementation and feasibility monitoring of effective youth and young adult early intervention programs for violence in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Title: Veteran Employment and Economic Security Research Consortium

PI: Brian Stevenson, PhD

Funder: VA Health Systems Research

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$2,477,678

Time Frame: 10/01/2024–09/30/2029

Description: This goal of this grant is to develop a Health Systems Research (HSR) funded Consortium of Research (CORE) to develop data infrastructure and a learning health system community of researchers dedicated to studying employment and economic security for Veterans. The Consortium of Research (CORE) will research employment and economic security to improve Veterans' economic security.

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

PI: Dara Drawbridge, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Boston MA

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$56,511

Time Frame: 01/01/2025–12/31/2025

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: Clubhouse International Expansion and Program Development

PI: Colleen McKay, MA

Funder: Clubhouse International

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$17,500

Time Frame: 01/01/2025–12/31/2025

Description: The Program for Clubhouse Research will administer the electronic Clubhouse Profile Questionnaire (CPQ) to mental health clubhouses affiliated with Clubhouse International and prepare a report with findings, create and implement a survey to evaluate based employment development efforts with coalitions and Clubhouses, and a tool or forms for tracking activities and work done with individuals, organizations, Clubhouses and start-up groups in South Carolina.

Title: Beta-Testing Reaching Calm: Exploring Digital Approaches to Address Suicide Risk in Obstetric Settings

PI: Martha Zimmermann, PhD

Funder: Center for Accelerating Practices to End Suicide (CAPES) Scholar (R03)

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$47,855

Time Frame: 01/01/2025–12/31/2025

Description: This study aims to integrate suicide risk assessment intervention into the Reaching Calm intervention by adapting Reaching Calm to include the Computerized Adaptive Test Suicide Scale (CAT-SS) and beta-testing Reaching Calm at one obstetric clinic.

Title: Enhancing Risk-Need-Responsivity Implementation: An Evidence-based System for Case Management Support

PIs: Dara Drawbridge, PhD

Funder: National Institute of Justice

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$1,445,599

Time Frame: 01/01/2025–12/31/2027

Description: This project is a rigorous demonstration project that tests the degree to which a framework from implementation science, the Evidence-based System for Innovation Support (EBSIS), improves Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) informed case management capacity, implementation, and reach in Probation.

Title: A Clinician-Facilitated Intervention to Integrate a Mobile Health App in Mental Health Care to Improve the Social Support of Veterans with PTSD

Site PI: Megan Kelly, PhD

Funder: Health Systems Research, VA Office of Research and Development

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$198,465

Time Frame: 07/01/2025–12/31/2026

Description: The primary aim of this project is to develop and evaluate a provider-supported intervention to integrate the ACTsocial app in mental health care.

Title: Coordinating Deaf Crisis Services in Massachusetts: A Comprehensive Needs Assessment across Statewide Systems and Agencies

Site PI: Melissa L. Anderson, PhD

Funder: MA Department of Mental Health, supported by FY25 SAMHSA/NASMHPD Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funding

Total Direct + Indirect Costs: \$250,000

Time Frame: 07/01/2025–06/30/2027

Description: Through this Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA), the DeafYES! Center for Deaf Empowerment and Recovery will provide an in-depth needs assessment of the Massachusetts mobile crisis intervention (MCI) system to identify gaps, resources, and opportunities to increase access to culturally competent crisis services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Appendix B

iSPARC DISSEMINATION PRODUCTS

Written Products



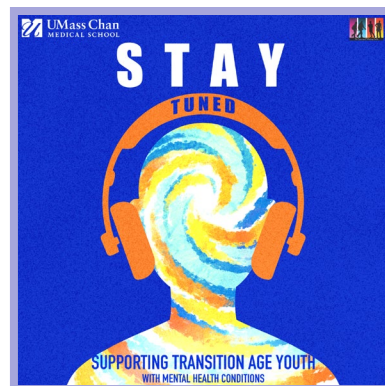
- [Youth Reoffending: Prevalence and Predictive Risk Factors in Two States](#) ☞
- [What is Community Participation?](#) ☞
- [Demystifying Civic Engagement: How to Make Your Voice Heard \(Beyond Voting!\) & 5 Tips to Get Started](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Vocational Services-Related Determinants](#) ☞
- [Guidance for Researchers Visiting a Community Advisory Board](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Work-Related Determinants](#) ☞
- [Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Psychosocial Determinants](#) ☞
- [College Students and Mental Health: Current Status](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Macro-Level Determinants](#) ☞
- [Protective Factors and Strength-Based Services: Impacts on Long-Term Youth Reoffending](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Employer-Related Determinants](#) ☞
- [Employment Outcomes among People with Disabilities: Health-Related Determinants](#) ☞
- [Incorporating Career and Technical Education in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance, Second Edition](#) ☞
- [Peer Academic Supports for Success: Implementation Guide](#) ☞

Podcasts

- [Episode 20: Scott Bryant-Comstock on Youth Mental Health and "Getting Busy" \(Part 2\)](#) ↗
- [Episode 21: Improving Mental Health through Community-based Music, Writing, and Art Programs](#) ↗
- [Episode 22: Living With a Disability — Work, Life, and Self Advocacy with Destiny Maxam](#) ↗
- [Episode 23: Finding Personal Fulfillment as a YA: Careers, Community & the Help that Gets Us There](#) ↗
- [Episode 24: Roots and Change: Youth Advocacy in Rural Communities](#) ↗
- [Episode 25: The Journey Within, Together: Spiritual Exploration and Community](#) ↗

Blogs

- [From Isolation to Inspiration: How Creative Communities Saved My Mental Health](#) ↗
- [Queering Connections: \(Re\)building Community and Self after a Breakup](#) ↗
- [From Escapism to Belonging: My Journey with Volunteering](#) ↗



Webinars



- [HYPE on Campus: Initial Results from an Educational Support Intervention for Young Adult Students with Mental Health Conditions](#) — Dr. Michelle Mullen & Ms. Debbie Nicoletti
- [Clubhouse Research: New Results, Resources, and Literature](#) — Ms. Colleen McKay & Clubhouse International
- [Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy](#) — by Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (CeKTER)
- [ACCS Coaching: A Strengths-Based Approach](#) — by the iSPARC TA Program
- [Youth & Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions — Reflections on 30 Years](#) — Parts 1 & 2 by the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research

Videos

- [Statistics That Can Shape Disability Policy](#)
- [2025 Annual Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Conference](#)
- [Shorts/Reels](#)

Appendix C

NEW iSPARC PEER-REVIEWED
PUBLICATIONS

- Aldalur, A., **Anderson, M. L.**, Van Orden, K. A., & Conner, K. R. (2025). Mental health treatment engagement among Deaf individuals. *Psychiatric Services*, 76(4), 402–405.
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- Ameral, V., Sofuoglu, M., & **Kelly, M. M.** (2025). Nicotine e-cigarettes for smoking cessation: A clinical pharmacology perspective. *Expert Review of Clinical Pharmacology*, 18(4), 189–196.
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- Demosthenes, E. J., Freedman, J., Hernandez, C., Shennette, L., Frisard, C. F., **Lemon, S. C.**, Gerber, B. S., & Amante, D. J. (2024). Preventing diabetes: What overweight and obese adults with prediabetes in the United States report about their providers' communication and attempted weight loss. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 46, 102859–102859.
- Ecker, A. H., Kolp, H., Poe, L., Finley, E. P., Pigee, R., **Kelly, M. M.**, Helmer, D. A., Cucciare, M. A., & Cully, J. (2025). Veteran perspectives on treatment and recovery from co-occurring anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, and unhealthy alcohol use. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 10.15288/jsad.24-00278. Advance online publication.
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Appendix D

SELECTION OF iSPARC
PRESENTATIONS AND TRAININGS

July 2024

- Dr. Nancy Byatt presented *The Importance of Workforce Development and Supports in State and Local Maternal Mental Health Services* at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and the Maternal Mental Health Learning Collaborative Webinar.
- Dr. Nancy Byatt presented *Perinatal Psychiatric Consult Model* at the 2024 Annual Zero to Three (ZTT) Conference.
- Drs. Michelle Crist and Dara Drawbridge presented *Recommendations for Re-Imagining the Massachusetts Community Service Program* to the Massachusetts Office of Community Corrections.*
- Dr. Michelle Mullen presented *Executive Function, Cognitive Load, and Persistence of College Students with Psychiatric Conditions* at the UConn 2024 Training Institutes.
- Dr. Kathryn Sabella provided an overview of what research is, gave examples of research iSPARC conducts, and outlined potential research careers to Worcester high school students during the UMass Chan [Dynamic Futures](#)  program's new research seminar.*
- Dr. Martha Zimmermann presented *Interventions for the Delivery of Mental Health Care Using Mobile Technologies* at the Business Research Intelligence Network 10th National Telehealth Summit.
- Dr. Martha Zimmermann presented *The Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway* at the Reproductive Psychiatry Trainee Interest Group virtual presentation.

August 2024

- Dr. Nancy Byatt presented *Screening: The Why, When, Where and How and Best Practices* at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) Peer Learning Series Webinar.
- Nancy Hu presented *Adapting the Avatar Platform for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Use Problems and Suicide Risk, for Delivery in the Emergency Department* to the Rochester Institute of Technology Priority Behavioral Health Consortium Psychology Interns and Postdoctoral Fellows.
- Isabella Mendes Izidoro, Clevanne Julce, Amy Celona, Drs. Nancy Byatt, Jessica Griffin, and Heather Forkey presented the poster *Implementation of Peer Support Specialists in the Perinatal Period and Early Childhood* for the UMass Chan Office of Undergraduate Medical Education's Summer Program.*†

- **Drs. Megan Kelly and Brian Stevenson** presented *Redefining the Target for Mental Health: Psychotherapeutic Approaches that Focus on Life Functioning* at the 2024 American Psychological Association Conference.
- **Dr. Brian Stevenson** presented *SEEK: An Innovative Employment Intervention to Prevent Job Loss Among Veterans and Purposeful Pathways: An Integrative Career Intervention for Veterans with Mental Health Concerns* at the 2024 American Psychological Association Conference's poster session.[†]
- **Dr. Brian Stevenson** presented *Innovations in Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Clinical Practice* at the National Veterans Health Administration Vocational Rehabilitation Program Managers Training Conference.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Screening and Assessment for Youth Corrections 101* at the 2024 Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators Annual Meeting.
- **Drs. Xihan Yang and Shaobing Su** presented *Schooling Adaptation among Separated-Reunited Chinese American Youth Following Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation* at the 2024 American Psychological Association Conference's poster session.[†]
- **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** presented *Characterizing User Needs to Inform Design Considerations for a Digital Perinatal Mental Health Intervention* at the UMass Chan Medical School Research, Community, and Curriculum Exploration Virtual Poster session.^{*†}

September 2024

- **Drs. Melissa Anderson and Alexander Wilkins** presented *Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients* for the UMass Chan Medical School Population Health Clerkship — Language Access and Patient Encounters.^{*}
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Data to Action: Using Science to Transform Perinatal Mental Health Care* for the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Psychiatry Grand Rounds.
- **Clevanne Julce and Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Sustainability and Scalability of Peer Support Professionals to Support Perinatal Mental Health Delivery* at the 44th Annual Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology Conference.
- **Clevanne Julce** presented *Harnessing the Expertise of Peer Support Professionals to Advance Racial Equity in Perinatal Mental Health Services* at the 44th Annual Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology Conference.

- **Clevanne Julce** presented the poster *Prevalence and Association of Preconception Healthcare Utilization and Psychiatric Medication Use in Pregnancy — Findings from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System* at the 2024 Preconception Health and Care Conference.[†]
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** presented the poster *Digital Behavioral Health Interventions for Emerging Adults* for the UMass Chan Medical School Psychology Internship and Postdoctoral Fellowship Didactic Series.^{*†}
- **Drs. Spencer Lawson** and **Gina Vincent** presented *Risk-Need-Responsivity Orientation & Recommendations* to the MA Parole Board and Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Board Members and Management Team.^{*}
- **Drs. Spencer Lawson** and **Gina Vincent** presented *How to Promote Community Success of Legally-Involved Individuals: Risk-Need-Responsivity* at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services Learning Hub.
- **Dr. Chris Sheldrick** presented *Checklists & Interviews: A Simulated Validity Comparison & Decision Analysis Framework for Considering Costs & Benefits* at the 21st Biennial EPA Epidemiology and Social Psychiatry Conference.
- **Dr. Chris Sheldrick** presented *A Mixed-Methods Clinician-Engaged Approach to Analyzing Health Equity Data* at the Healthcare Data & Analytics Association 2024 Annual Conference.
- **Dr. Chris Sheldrick** presented *A Policy Simulator to Help Researchers Develop Policy-Relevant Research* at the 2024 Society for Implementation Research Conference (SIRC).
- **Dr. Brian Stevenson** presented *The Promise of Prevention: Moving Beyond a Passive System of Mental Healthcare* at the 2024 Coming Together For Action Global Alliance for Behavioral and Social Justice Biannual Conference.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Youth Protective Factors Study: Supervision Based on Risks, Strengths, and Development* at the National Institute of Justice Advancing Justice Through Science 2024 Conference.
- **Drs. Xihan Yang** and **Shaobing Su** presented *Parental Mental Health Following Lengthy Parent-Child Separation: A Mixed-methods Study with Affected Chinese Immigrant Parents* at the Boston College Diversity Challenge Conference.^{*}
- **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** presented *How Participatory User-Centered Design Methods Can Optimize Digital Perinatal Mental Health Intervention* at the 2024 International Marcé Perinatal Mental Health Society Biennial Conference.

- Drs. Martha Zimmermann, Chris Sheldrick, Edwin Boudreaux, and Nancy Byatt presented *Examining a Transdiagnostic Target for Prevention: A Scoping Review of Anxiety Sensitivity in the Perinatal Period* at the 2024 International Marcé Perinatal Mental Health Society Biennial Conference.

October 2024

- Drs. Melissa Anderson and Alexander Wilkins conducted the *How to Provide Signs of Safety Therapy: A Hands-On, Skills-Based Workshop* at the DMH-WRCH Deaf Mental Health Symposium.*
- Dr. Nancy Byatt presented *Advancing Perinatal Mental Health in Canada* at the 2nd Annual National Perinatal Mental Health Symposium.
- Drs. Michelle Crist and Dara Drawbridge presented *Massachusetts Community Service Program Reimagined: A Strength-Based Approach* to the Massachusetts Probation Service Executive Committee.*
- Dr. Lourah Kelly, Nancy Hu and Samantha Hersh presented the posters *Consumer Feedback of an Avatar-Guided Digital Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Use Problems and Suicidal Thoughts* and *Development of an Avatar-Guided Digital Intervention for Emerging Adults with Alcohol Use Problems and Suicidal Thoughts for Delivery in the Emergency Department* at the UMass Chan Medical School Psychology Research Day.*[†]
- Dr. Lourah Kelly delivered *Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk in Outpatient Settings* as part of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Delivering Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk Trainings.*
- Dr. Megan Kelly presented *Body Dysmorphic Disorder: Clinical Features, Assessment, and Treatment* at the VA Providence Healthcare System Mental Health Colloquium Series.
- Dr. Megan Kelly presented the poster *Innovations in Clinical Practice using Technology-Based Behavioral Interventions* at the UMass Chan Medical School Psychology Research Day.*[†]
- Felicia McGinnis and Dr. Melissa Anderson presented *Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients* at the UMass Chan Department of Family Medicine and Community Health Research Forum.*
- Drs. Sarah Palmer, Martha Zimmermann, Nancy Byatt and Ed Tronick presented the poster *Relationships Between Postpartum Bonding and PRISM and MCPAP for Moms* at the 2024 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Annual Meeting.[†]

- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented the national webinar *The Youth Protective Factors Study: Risk, Strengths, and Reoffending* hosted by the Council of State Governments.
- **Drs. Gina Vincent** and **Spencer Lawson** presented *Risk-Need-Responsivity Orientation & Recommendations* to the Massachusetts Parole Board Supervisors.*
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Validation of the New Colorado Detention Screen and Taking the “What Works” to “How to Make it Work”: Implementing RNR* at the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum Fall Annual Conference.
- **Dr. Alexander Wilkins** presented *Leveraging Community Engaged Methods to Address Behavioral Health Disparities in the Deaf Community* at the Disability Awareness: Innovations in Defragmenting Mental and Physical Health Care for People with Disabilities Conference.
- **Dr. Kimberly Yonkers** presented *Substance Use in Pregnant Individuals* for the UMass Chan Medical School/UMass Memorial Health Department of Neurosurgery Grand Rounds.*

November 2024

- **Drs. Melissa Anderson** and **Alexander Wilkins** and **Timothy Riker** presented *Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients* at the CDC Communicators' Network Session.
- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented *Engagement of Deaf Community Members in Seeking Safety Adaptation Work* at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Meeting.
- **Malekeh Amini**, **Dr. Nancy Byatt**, and **Jamie Zahlaway Belsito** presented *Maternal Mental Health: Promoting Health Across Generations* at the 2024 Behavioral Health Tech Conference.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Managing Postpartum Psychosis: The Perspective of Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs* at the 2024 Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry Annual Meeting.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Data to Action: Using Science to Transform Perinatal Mental Health Care* at the Yale University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry Grand Rounds.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Research to Action: Transforming Perinatal Care to Include Mental Healthcare* at the 2024 Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative Summit.

- **Kayla Carew** presented *Does Age Matter? Protective Risk Factors vs Risk Factors in Predicting Violent Recidivism by Adolescent Age Groups* at the American Society of Criminology Annual Conference.
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** gave three poster presentations at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Meeting.
 - *Examination of the Addiction Severity Index in a Sample Not Recruited for Substance Use Problems[†]*
 - *Effects of Residential Treatment and the Parent SMART Intervention on Behavioral Health Services Utilization Post-Treatment[†]*
 - *A Technology-Assisted Parenting Intervention Attenuates the Effects of Adolescent Substance Use on Suicidal Ideation after Residential Treatment[†]*
- **Dr. Megan Kelly** gave two presentations at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Meeting.
 - *A Web-Based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Tobacco Cessation Intervention for Veterans with Mental Health Disorders: Results from Usability Testing*
 - *Using Community-Based Participatory Action Research Methods to Co-Develop an Intervention to Improve the Social Connectedness of LGBTQIA+ Transition Age Youth with Serious Mental Health Conditions*
- **Dr. Spencer Lawson** delivered a *Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2024 Booster Training* to the Massachusetts Parole Board Field and Life Sentence Unit Parole Officers.
- **Dr. Spencer Lawson** and **Namita Railkar** presented *Risk Need Responsivity* to the Massachusetts Department of Corrections.
- **Dr. Michelle Mullen** presented *Designing Research with a Focus on Implementation Methods for Policy Research* at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice Social Welfare PhD program.
- **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** presented *Engaging Young Adults and Their Communities in the Design and Delivery of Mental Health Services: Making it Work* at the 9th Annual Pennsylvania Early Psychosis Conference.

December 2024

- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented *Signs of Safety Therapy* at the Statewide Meeting of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services Programs.*

- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented at and facilitated the roundtable webinar *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Screening for Perinatal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders* for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funded Maternal and Child Health Bureau Technical Assistance and Innovation Center for Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (MMHSUD) Programs.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Promoting Perinatal Mental Health Care* at the Perinatal-Neonatal Quality Improvement Network of Massachusetts (PNQIN) Fall Summit.*
- **Drs. Chris Sheldrick and Nancy Byatt** presented two posters at the 17th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health.
 - Application of the Health Equity Implementation Framework to Obstetric Care - Experiences of Economically Marginalized Perinatal Individuals[†]
 - Partnering from the Start: Simultaneously Co-Designing a Perinatal Mental Health Intervention and Implementation Plan to Center Communities and Optimize Implementation Pace[†]
- **Dr. Bo Wang** presented *Multi-Year Implementation of an Evidence-Based HIV Prevention Program in the Bahamas Government School System: Challenges and Potential Solutions* at the 17th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health poster presentation.

January 2025

- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented at and facilitated the roundtable webinar *Supporting Perinatal Individuals Experiencing Substance Use Disorders: Strategies for Perinatal Care Professionals and Systems of Care* for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funded Maternal and Child Health Bureau Technical Assistance and Innovation Center for Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (MMHSUD) Programs.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented the webinar *The Light Within Our Wounds: How Lived Expertise, Partnership, and Science can be Levers for Transforming Perinatal Care* for the University of Exeter's Unlocking Global Solutions in Perinatal Mental Health.
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** was featured in the *Research Explores Avatar Therapy for Alcohol Use Disorder, Suicide Prevention* episode of the Voices of UMass Chan Podcast.
- **Felicia McGinnis and Dr. Alexander Wilkins** presented *Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients* as part of the BH-JI Navigator Training.

- **Dr. Shaobing Su** presented the poster *Navigating Parenthood: Exploring Parenting Strategies among Youth Aging Out of Foster Care* at the 29th Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research.[†]
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Mental Health and Trauma Screening and Their Implementation* at the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators 2025 Biannual meeting.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented the webinar *Effective Strategies for Violence Prevention and Serving Higher Risk Youth in the Community* for the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Navigating concerns on Youth Crime, Violence, and Behavioral Health: Judicial Leadership in Action Series.
- **Dr. Kimberly Yonkers** presented *Substance Use in Pregnant Individuals* at the University of Washington Grand Rounds.

February 2025

- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented *Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Therapy Toolkit for Co-occurring Trauma and Addiction* to the UMass Chan Medical School/Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital Pre-Doctoral Internship Program.*
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Data to Action: Using Science to Transform Perinatal Mental Health* for the Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital Grand Rounds.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Research to Action: Transforming Perinatal Care to Include Mental Healthcare* for Boston University Department of Psychiatry's Grand Rounds.*
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *MCAP for Moms* to the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) Mental Health Task Force.*
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Optimizing Perinatal Mental Health Care in MA: Quality Improvement in Inpatient and Outpatient Settings* at the 2025 Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) Annual Meeting.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Postpartum Psychosis* to psychiatry residents for the UMass Chan Medical School Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Biological Psychiatry Seminar.*
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** presented *Who Has the Highest Rates of Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders and Suicide Risk* to the UMass Chan Medical School Addiction Psychiatry Fellows.*

- **Dr. Michelle Mullen** presented *HYPE-on-Campus: Supporting Academic Persistence in Students with Mental Health Conditions* at the First Year Experience 2025 Conference.
- **Esther Boama-Nyarko** presented *Examining the Association Between a Biomarker-Based Health Index and Adverse Obstetric Outcomes Among Perinatal Individuals* for the UMass Chan Medical School Project in Process Seminar Series (PiPSS).*

March 2025

- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Improving Mental Health through Perinatal Psychiatry Access Programs* at the Maternal Mental Health Lunch and Learn, an Educational Briefing for Congressional Members and Staffers to Learn About the Latest Information and Policy Priorities in Maternal Mental Health.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Strengthening Integrated Care in Specialized Settings: Collaborative Care in Specialty Care* to the Center of Excellence for Integrated Health Solutions at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.
- **Kayla Carew** and **Drs. Spencer Lawson** and **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Delays in Parole Release Project* at the 3rd Joint Department of Corrections & Parole Preliminary Data Meeting.
- **Dr. Stephenie Lemon** presented *A Public Health Framework for Climate Resilience and Health Equity* at the Our Planet, Our Health: 2025 Climate Action Convention
- **Tracy Neville**, **Mei Pearlstein** and **Dr. Kathryn Sabella** presented *Integrating Young Adult Experts by Experience into Community Engaged Research: A Case Study from a Research Center in the United States* at the 7th International Conference on Youth Mental Health.
- **Kristen Roy-Bujnowski** and **Drs. Bo Wang** and **Maryann Davis** presented *Effectiveness Trial Results for Peer Academic Supports for Success for University Students with Mental Health Conditions* at the 7th International Conference on Youth Mental Health.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** gave two presentations at the American Psychology-Law Society Annual Conference.
 - Youth Protective Factors Study
 - What Strengths-Exactly-Protect Youth Against Reoffending?
- **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** presented *Population-based Approaches to Addressing Behavioral Health in Medical Settings* at the 5th Annual Behavioral Health Management Summit.

April 2025

- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented *Mental Health Disparities in the Deaf Community* to the UMass Chan Medical School PQHS Psychiatric Epidemiology Course.*
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Optimizing Perinatal Mental Health Care in MA: Quality Improvement in Inpatient and Outpatient Settings* at the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) Monthly meeting.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Community-Informed Approaches: Midwives & Doulas as Essential Partners in Enhancing Maternal Mental Wellness* for the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Maternal Mental Health: Looking Beyond Webinar.
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** presented the poster *Suicide risk among persons in recovery, with substance use disorder, and without in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health* at the 2nd Annual National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science.†
- **Dr. Lourah Kelly** had three poster presentations at the 2025 Collaborative Perspectives on Addiction Meeting.
 - Associations between quality of mother and father figure relationships and substance use among emerging adults with mental illness and serious antisocial behavior†
 - Consumer feedback of an avatar-guided digital intervention for emerging adults with alcohol use problems and suicidal thoughts†
 - Family-based treatment for Internet gaming disorder among youth: Results from two pilot randomized controlled trials†
- **Dr. Megan Kelly** presented *United We Study: Engaging the Veteran Community in Research on the Development of Digital Health Assessment and Intervention* at the 2025 Collaborative Perspectives on Addiction Conference.
- **Dr. Michelle Mullen** and **Debbie Nicolellis** gave two presentations at the 40th Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability.
 - *HYPE on Campus: Supporting Success in College as a Pathway to Meaningful Employment for Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions*
 - *FSST at Work: Early Results on an Employment Support Curriculum to Teach Executive Functioning Skills to Young Adult Workers*
- **Dr. Michelle Mullen** and **Debbie Nicolellis** presented *The Role of Executive Functioning Skill Development* at the 2025 NARRTC Annual Meeting.

- **Tracy Neville, Dr. Kathryn Sabella and YAB Members** presented *Beyond Consultation: Meaningful Collaboration with Young Adults with Lived Experience* at the 2025 NARRTC Annual Meeting.
- **Debbie Nicolellis** presented *Promoting Young Adult Success in Work and School: Free, Online Training for Providers* at the 2025 NARRTC Annual Meeting.
- **Namita Railkar and Drs. Spencer Lawson and Gina Vincent** presented *Building Equity in Objective Prison Classification: A Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities — Data Walk* to the MA Department of Corrections Classification Steering Committee.*
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Valid Risk Screening to Reduce Use of Detention* at the 2025 Excellence in Youth Defense Conference.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *What Works with Youth? Effective Use of Science to Assess Risk, Improve, Outcomes, & Enhance Public Safety* at the 2025 Institute for New Juvenile and Family Court Judges.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** gave the webinar *The Influence of Protective Factors and Strength-Based Services on Youth Reoffending* hosted by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center.
- **Dr. Alexander Wilkins** presented *Community-Based Participatory Research and Deaf MET* for the UMass Chan Medical School Project in Process Seminar Series (PiPSS).*
- **Dr. Kimberly Yonkers** gave *Grand Rounds* to the University of Utah.

May 2025

- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented *How to Provide Signs of Safety Therapy: A Hands-On, Skills-Based Workshop* at the Greater Nashua Mental Health Workshop.
- **Dr. Melissa Anderson** presented the webinar *Self-Care for Health Service Providers* for the Anixter Center.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** gave four presentations at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Annual Meeting.
 - *A Brighter Future: Innovative Care for Pregnant People with Substance Use Disorders*
 - *Novel and Non-Pharmacologic Therapeutics for Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders*
 - *Improving Access to Perinatal Mental Health Care for Underserved Populations*

- *Clinical, Ethical, and Legal Perspectives on How to Provide Psychiatric Care in the Context of Policies that Drive Inequities in Reproductive Health*
- Dr. Nancy Byatt presented *Transforming Perinatal Care to Include Mental Healthcare* at the Annual Merrimack Valley Perinatal Health Summit.
- Colleen McKay presented *Results from the 2024 Clubhouse Profile Questionnaire: European Clubhouses* at the European Clubhouse Conference.
- Dr. Michelle Mullen presented *Helping Youth on the Path to Employment (HYPE): Enhancing Career Development Outcomes Among Young Adults with Mental Health Conditions* at the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Annual Conference.*
- Jennifer Pendleton and Dr. Spencer Lawson presented *Strengthening IRACS: Evaluation Milestones, Activities, and Insights* to the Indiana Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) Advisory Board and the (IRACS) Team Supervisors.
- Namita Railkar and Drs. Spencer Lawson and Dr. Gina Vincent presented *Building Equity in Objective Prison Classification: A Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities — Data Walk* to the Correctional Equity in Classification Advisory Board.
- Dr. Gina Vincent presented *Effective Interventions for Reducing Youth Violence* at the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Centers of Excellence Annual Conference.*
- Dr. Bo Wang had three oral and three poster presentations at the 16th AIDSImpact Conference.
 - *Multilevel Risk and Protective Factors Influencing PrEP Use Among Young MSM in Urban Thailand: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach*
 - *HIV Risk and Mental Health Among Bahamian Adolescents: Insights from a National Study*
 - *Predicting Adolescent High-Risk Trajectory Groups Using Machine Learning: A Foundation for Precision HIV Prevention*
 - *Impact of Substance Use and Socio-Behavioral Factors on ART Adherence among Young People Living with HIV in Zambia[†]*
 - *The Impact of Stigma on Antiretroviral Therapy Adherence: Insights from HIV-Positive Young People Using Substances in Zambia[†]*
 - *Multi-Year National Implementation of an Evidence-Based HIV Prevention Program in Schools: Implementation Trajectories and Multilevel Determinants[†]*

- **Dr. Xihan Yang** presented the poster *Cognitive Pretesting: An Approach to Address Autism Research Disparities Among Families with Limited English Proficiency* at the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) Annual Meeting.[†]
- **Dr. Xihan Yang** presented *Immigration Stress, Resilience, and Cultural Adaptation: Research and Intervention for Asian and Mexican Immigrant Children* at the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Biennial meeting.
- **Drs. Xihan Yang and Shaobing Su** presented *Adaptive Reunification for Children and Parents Affected by Early and Prolonged Parent-Child Separation: Insights from Separated-Reunited Parent-Child Dyads* at the 2025 Biennial Meeting of Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD).
- **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** gave the poster presentation *Embedding a Tech-Enabled Perinatal Mental Health Program in an Obstetric Clinic Improves Clinical Outcomes among Patients with Depression and Anxiety* at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Clinical & Scientific Annual Meeting.[†]
- **Dr. Martha Zimmermann** presented *Characterizing User Needs to Inform Design Considerations for a Digital Perinatal Mental Health Intervention* at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Annual Meeting.

June 2025

- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *Rates and Patterns of Discontinuation of Antidepressants Due to Pregnancy* at the Academy Health Annual Research 2025 Meeting.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Research to Action: Transforming Perinatal Care to Include Mental Healthcare* at the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB) Summit.
- **Dr. Nancy Byatt** presented *From Research to Action: Transforming Perinatal Care to Include Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care* at the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA)-funded Forefronts in Substance Abuse Disorders during Pregnancy, Postpartum and Pediatrics Training Course.
- **Drs. Michelle Crist and Dara Drawbridge** presented *Improving Public Safety Outcomes with Evidence-Based Approaches* to the National Association of Probation Executives.
- **Dr. Shaobing Su** presented *Parent-Child Separation and Child Mental Health* to the Camp Rising Sun Leadership Program.

- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *What Works with Youth? Effective Use of Science to Assess Risk, Improve, Outcomes, & Enhance Public Safety* at the Courting Judicial Excellence Training Series Workshop.
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Effective Risk Reduction: Risk-Need-Responsivity* to the MA Department of Youth Services.*
- **Dr. Gina Vincent** presented *Maximizing Use of Risk-Needs Assessments in Court Decisions* at the Juvenile Judges Justice 2025 Conference.
- **Dr. Bo Wang** gave the poster presentation *Assessing Acceptability, Usability, and Improvement Needs for an mHealth Intervention to Improve PrEP Uptake and Adherence: Insights from Frontline Users* at the Asia-Pacific AIDS and Co-Infections 2025 Conference.†
- **Drs. Martha Zimmermann and Nancy Byatt** gave the poster presentation *Application of the Health Equity Implementation Framework to Obstetric Care Access — Qualitative Experiences of Economically Marginalized Perinatal Individuals* at the Academy Health Annual Research 2025 Meeting.†

* Massachusetts-focused

† Poster presentation

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