



2025 Report on Make America Healthy Again Initiatives

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
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1.0 Nutrition and Fitness

AL-Civitan International Research Center, UCEDD/LEND

Nutrition faculty member provides professional presentations focused on eating disorders, obesity, and nutrition in autistic children and youth within our training program and in the community.

Impact/Outcome: In 2025, 7 presentations with nearly 500 attendees.

Scope: State, regional, and national levels

Contact: Sarah O'Kelley (sokelley@uab.edu)

AZ-Institute for Human Development, UCEDD

Health Matters Collaboration: An evidence-based health promotion program is using the curriculum in ways that promote intergenerational mentorship with adult advocates, high school students, and older community members.

Outcome/Impact: Currently conducting a pilot program where three adult self-advocates are leading the HealthMatters curriculum for an inclusive high school adaptive Physical Education class with 10 special education students and 10 athletic partners. Also integrating the local culinary education program at the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, Tucson Village Farm, to provide hands-on healthy cooking classes as part of the HealthMatters activities.

Contact: Yumi Shirai, PhD (yumish@arizona.edu) and Loretta Alvarez, MSE (lalvarez@arizona.edu)

Collaboration with Tucson Village Farm Summer Camp for Youth: Partnering with the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, Sonoran Center staff delivered training and technical assistance to Tucson Village Farm's summer camp staff and volunteers in the summer of 2025, with a strong focus on inclusive practices and accommodations for campers with disabilities. As an organization, Tucson Village Farm is committed to creating an inclusive environment where children of all abilities can participate in its camps and events. The Sonoran Center equips the team with essential knowledge and skills. This collaboration will continue for summer 2026.

Contact: Loretta Alvarez, MSE (lalvarez@arizona.edu)



Physical Exercise for Adults & Aging Individuals with IDD: In collaboration with the Pima Council on Aging and the UA Andrew Weil Center, Sonoran Center is co-sponsoring an enhanced physical exercise class for adults and aging individuals with IDD. The class meets three times per week for one hour, led by a certified instructor. Several self-advocates from Sonoran Center/ArtWorks will assist with facilitation. The program starts in May 2026 and expects to recruit 20 older adults and their care partners, as well as disability community members. This pilot phase will be evaluated after two months of implementation.

Contact: Yumi Shirai, PhD (yumish@arizona.edu)

CA-UC Davis at the MIND Institute, UCEDD/LEND

Massey Family Clinic and Feeding Recovery at the UC Davis MIND Institute provides comprehensive evidence-based assessments and intervention recommendations for children with possible neurodevelopmental conditions. Our care team includes specially trained providers such as developmental pediatricians, pediatric dietitians, feeding therapists, genetic counselors, and social workers.

Outcome/Impact: Unique individuals assessed in the 2024-2025 program year: 3,815.

Scope: The greater Sacramento area and rural Northern California region.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/clinic/> for more information.

Contact: R. Scott Akins, D.O. at 916-703-0248 or (rsakins@health.ucdavis.edu)

The Feeding Recovery Clinic is an interdisciplinary clinic that provides evaluation and ongoing care for infants and young children with clinically significant feeding conditions. Many children cared for in feeding recovery clinic present with co-occurring neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, neuromuscular conditions, Down Syndrome and complex neurogenetic conditions. The multidisciplinary team includes a speech therapist with expertise in feeding therapy, a pediatric dietitian and a developmental behavioral pediatrician.

Outcome/Impact: 61 unique individuals seen for feeding clinic in the 2024-2025 program.

Scope: The greater Sacramento area and rural Northern California region.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/clinic/> for more information.

Contact: R. Scott Akins, D.O. at 916-703-0248 or (rsakins@health.ucdavis.edu)



CA-USC, Children's Hospital, UCEDD/LEND

BodyWorks Obesity Management Program: These classes help children, adolescents, and their families make healthy lifestyle changes. These classes review the basics of nutrition, nutrition labels, portions, and physical activity. The classes also include a weekly 5-10 minute phone consultation with a physician to check in on their health goals.

Outcome/Impact: 396 children, [12% with autism, 5% with ADHD, 3% with global I/DD] per year. Over the past year we've provided 27 gift cards for \$50 to families who endorsed not having food at home that evening. Funding was from a generous philanthropic gift. After care feeding group, consults: 31, Snackers Group: 12, Reframing Mealtimes: 20, Making Connections: 4, Incredible Years Summer Fall: 1, Incredible Years Fall: 2. Children with ASD received feeding therapy: 33.

Contact: Larry Yin (lyin@chla.usc.edu)

CO-JFK Partners/University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, UCEDD/LEND

Brave Bites: A Narrative-Based Tool to Support Food Exploration in Autistic Children and Their Caregivers: This project is developing an engaging, evidence-informed children's book designed to support autistic children, their families, and their care providers in learning to explore and try new foods. Grounded in principles of sensory sensitivity, repeated exposure, and autonomy, the book uses relatable, fun characters and visual storytelling to model positive, low-pressure food experiences. The goal is to provide families and early childhood educators with an accessible tool that promotes food exploration while respecting individual preferences and neurodiversity. A complete storyboard and pilot-testing with children and caregivers will be conducted in this calendar year.

Scope: Colorado

Contact: Susan L Johnson (Susan.Johnson@cuanschutz.edu) and Callie Gitlin (Callie.Gitlin@cuanschutz.edu)

CT-A. J. Pappanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

Early mental health and social-emotional development book: A user-friendly flipbook was developed for parents and caregivers, which outlined social-emotional developmental milestones for infants and young children. Through collaborations with local health departments and centers. Learn the Signs, Act Early funded.



Impact/Outcome: A total of 310 flipbooks were distributed to parents and families of infants and young children.

Scope: Connecticut state-wide initiative

Contact: Mary Elizabeth (bruder@uchc.edu) and Tara Lutz (lutz@uchc.edu)

DC-Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Community-Based Nutrition Consultation and Healthy Eating Initiative Community- and research-based initiative provides teacher consultation and parent and family consultation focused on healthy eating for young children with autism and sensory-based feeding challenges. The initiative uses community-engaged approaches to support developmentally appropriate, sensory-informed nutrition strategies. Activities include family-centered nutrition guidance, educator consultation around mealtime routines, community garden engagement, and medical- and undergraduate-student co-led healthy cooking demonstrations. The project integrates Food as Medicine into the didactic training of medical and undergraduate students, who serve as both co-educators and participants, aligning medical education with community-based nutrition practice.

Outcome/Impact: Continuing into 2026 and advances the Administration's priorities related to nutrition, prevention, lifestyle behavior change, and early childhood health.

Scope: Washington, DC (Wards 7 & 8)

Contact: Dr. Kim Bullock, GUCEDD, kab75@georgetown.edu

Georgetown Thrive Center Innovation Hub Fellowship: Disability, Early Development, Nutrition, and Family Mental Health (Fall 2025) Fellowship teams through the Georgetown Thrive Center Innovation Hub focused on disability-related innovation in early childhood development, family mental health, and nutrition. Fellowship teams included a group from Special Olympics advancing the Young Athletes App to promote development through play for young children with and without disabilities; a Pacific Northwest-based clinical team strengthening NICU-to-home transitions with a focus on perinatal mental health for parents of medically and developmentally vulnerable infants; and Easy Bites, a responsive feeding initiative addressing picky eating, nutrition-related stress, and parental mental load in families with young children, including those who are neurodivergent or medically complex. Across projects, fellows applied prevention-oriented, family-centered design approaches to strengthen supports during critical early



transitions. The fellowship emphasized applied learning, cross-sector collaboration, and disability-informed innovation grounded in lived family experience.

Outcome/Impact: This work aligns with HHS priorities related to early development, mental health awareness, nutrition, prevention, and workforce development through community-based innovation.

Scope: National (multi-region fellowship teams)

Contact: Pamala Trivedi (pat33@georgetown.edu)

FL-Mailman Center for Child Development, UCEDD/LEND

Debbie Institute Special Olympics Sport and Plan Program: Debbie Institute has partnered with Special Olympics Young Athletes Sport and Play Program for children with disabilities aged 2 to 7 for two years. Children are provided with the opportunity to participate in activities that meet their skill levels along with children of all abilities. The program is coordinated by our Physical Therapy Team in collaboration with classroom teachers.

Outcomes/Impact: Approximately 68 children participate in weekly activities that emphasize fitness, social development, and communication skills. Our PT Team has been invited to present information about our program throughout the community. Program will provide a model for other schools throughout the community.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Kathleen Vergara at (kvergara@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6547

Child Care Food Program (FDOH): Research shows that well-nourished children are healthier, more attentive, and have better mental performance than children who are under-nourished. The Child Care Food Program (CCFP) helps childcare facilities implement best practices to ensure children have access to a variety of nutritious foods for healthy growth and to reduce obesity risk. The program reimburses participating organizations for nutritious meals and snacks provided to children in their care. Participating facilities include childcare centers, family day care homes, recreational centers, afterschool educational or enrichment programs, and domestic violence and homeless/runaway shelters. The Child Care Food Program also facilitates the Afterschool Meals and Homeless Children Nutrition programs. All three programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Scope: Miami-Dade County



Contact: Kathleen Vergara at (kvergara@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6547

CMS Adolescent Medicine and Endocrinology/Diabetes Disease: If your child was born with or has developed an endocrine condition, like diabetes, you want care from a team you can trust. At University of Miami Health System, your child receives top-notch care delivered by experienced pediatric endocrinologists. Pediatric endocrinologists specialize in caring for children who have conditions that affect their hormones and growth.

Outcomes/Impact: We work with specialists from Holtz Children's Hospital and Nicklaus Children's Hospital to provide a comprehensive approach to your child's care. Our board-certified pediatric endocrinologists treat children at a variety of pediatric hospitals. We specialize in treating children of all ages, from newborns to teens.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Daniel Armstrong at (DArmstrong@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6801

Healthy Caregivers-Healthy Children (HC2): Obesity prevention and health promotion program for children ages 2-5 within community childcare centers to improve school food, nutrition, and physical activity. Program was previously funded by USDA and HRSA and currently have an NICHD R01 submitted in February 2026 that is awaiting review.

Outcome/Impact: HC2 was designed to improve the nutritional and physical activity environment of community-based childcare centers to improve the health of young children ages 2-5. We have been doing this work for over 20 years and have impacted hundreds of childcare centers and thousands of children. We have published findings that show a reduction in child BMI and improved nutrition and physical activity within children centers. We recently expanded the program to address the needs for children with special needs. The program has been funded by different federal agencies. We recently submitted a grant application to NICHD to conduct a randomized controlled trial to determine HC2 effectiveness on children with special needs including autism and developmental disabilities.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Ruby Natale at (rnatale@med.miami.edu) or 954-552-0446



HI-Hawaii Center on Disability Studies UCEDD

Inclusive First Aid/CPR/AED Program provides American Heart Association certification for individuals with I/DD, caregivers, and family members.

Impact/Outcome: 94 participants have been certified since March 2020

Scope: Hawaii

Direct Link: <https://coe.hawaii.edu/cds/current-projects/wellness-matters-programs-cpr/>

Contact: Meghan Miller, Ph.D., meghan.miller@hawaii.edu or (808) 956-0891

The Swim Safe: Aquatic Skills Development Program teaches water safety and basic swimming skills to individuals with ASD ages 4 through adult and their support team members.

Impact/Outcome: Over 580 families have been assisted since August 2017

Direct Link: <https://coe.hawaii.edu/cds/current-projects/swim-safe-asd/>

Contact: Meghan Miller, Ph.D., meghan.miller@hawaii.edu or (808) 956-0891

The Wellness Matters Physical Activity Program offers popular lifetime, Paralympic, and adapted physical activities for individuals with I/DD ages 14 to adult, their caregivers, family members and coaches.

Impact/Outcome: Over 30 families participating since October 2022

Scope: Hawaii

Direct Link: <https://coe.hawaii.edu/cds/current-projects/wellness-matters-physical-activity-program/>

Contact: Meghan Miller, Ph.D., meghan.miller@hawaii.edu or (808) 956-0891

KY-Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute, UCEDD/LEND

State Health Improvement Plan is provided by HDI staff who serve on multiple workgroups to ensure disability is represented in the planning and implementation of the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). Technical assistance is provided to the following priority areas in the SHIP: access to care, mental health, smoking/vaping/tobacco, and nutrition.





Impact: 175 people participated in 2025

Scope: Kentucky state-wide initiative

Contact: Beth Potter (beth.potter@uky.edu)

MS-Institute for Disability Studies, UCEDD

Empowering Pathways to Independence in Communities (EPIC) is a community-based volunteer program that assists young adults with disabilities, ages 21-40, in building skills for greater independence and employment success. EPIC connects trained students and community volunteers to individuals with disabilities seeking to improve independent life skills. The program is provided through a collaborative grant with National Community Care Corps.

Impact: 24 total participants which includes volunteers and those adults with disabilities that are served. EPIC also provides practical, skills-based education that influences daily behaviors and lasting independence for youth and adults with disabilities. This curriculum is focused on health-related and the development of other independent living skills, such as financial literacy, healthy physical activity, engagement with community and peers, and healthy food choices. Through educating youth and young people with disabilities to make informed choices, EPIC aligns with MAHA's focus on Public Awareness & Education by increasing understanding of independent living activities and skills and fostering self-advocacy, and it also intersects with Mental Health priorities by promoting stress management strategies and activities for young adults with disabilities.

Scope: South Central Mississippi Region

Contact: Scott Mullins, LMSW at (Scott.Mullins@usm.edu) or 601.266.6129

Special Olympics (SO) College Southern Miss program promotes unified sports and leadership activities, bringing together college students and individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The program focuses on creating opportunities for peer socialization, leadership development, and athletic participation, fostering a sense of community and teamwork. This program aligns with MAHA's Public Awareness & Education focus area, which emphasizes lifestyle factors such as nutrition, physical activity, and screen time. The program also aligns with MAHA's School and Community Nutrition and Fitness Activities through building community engagement, increasing physical fitness, and promoting healthier lifestyles among participants and volunteers.





Impact: 25 total participants which includes the Special Olympic athletes and Special Olympic student partners (University students)

Scope: South Central Mississippi Region

Contact: Aysha Robertson, MSW at (Aysha.Robertson@usm.edu) or 601.266.4612.

NJ-The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Ready and Healthy for School uses health topics (i.e., nutrition, physical activity, sleep, social emotional development) to introduce foundational literacy and language skills for children entering Kindergarten and their families. The workshops revolve around a storybook that discusses the health theme. Families learn about the health topics and literacy skills are embedded by emphasizing featured words in the theme, use of new vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Sessions include interactive activities, such as singing, reciting poems and movement.

Scope: NJ, Statewide

Contact: Manuel Jimenez , MD, MS (jimenema@rwjms.rutgers.edu) and Lesley Morrow, PhD (lesley.morrow@gse.rutgers.edu)

NV-Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

Tennis Buddies is a fun, interactive, and supportive environment for individuals with developmental disabilities where they can improve their fitness levels and learn to play tennis.

Outcome/Impact: 125 people participated in 2025

Scope: Reno, NV area

Contact: Randall Owen (randallowen@unr.edu)

NY-Rose F. Kennedy Center, UCEDD/LEND

Special Olympics Long Island – Adaptive Sports and Community Engagement: Special Olympics Long Island hosted an event featuring adaptive sports activities designed for athletes with disabilities, promoting physical activity, inclusion, and community engagement. The event supported recreation-related participation and provided experiential learning opportunities for trainees. Activities were implemented in collaboration with community recreation partners to expand reach and engagement



among individuals with developmental disabilities. This activity supports mental fitness, physical activity, and social inclusion for people with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, A total of 40 participants took part in the activity, including 30 adults with disabilities and 10 trainees.

Scope: Long Island, New York

Contact: Vincent Siasoco, MD, MBA (vsiasoco@montefiore.org)

Special Olympics Health Advisory: The Special Olympics Health Advisory convenes quarterly meetings to support and advise Special Olympics New York in advancing athlete health efforts. The activity provides technical assistance focused on health-related planning and program development.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, a total of 13 participants were engaged, including 8 professionals and para-professionals, 4 family members/caregivers, and 1 adult with a disability, with intentional inclusion of self-advocates and individuals with lived experience. This advisory supports inclusive, community-informed approaches to athlete health and mental fitness.

Scope: New York state-wide initiative

Contact: Vincent Siasoco, MD, MBA (vsiasoco@montefiore.org)

Introduction of IDD Across the Life Span” Nervous System and Human Behavior Course: This annual 2-hour class introduces Einstein’s 2nd year medical students to the etiology of autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD), including genetic, environmental, and idiopathic exposures associated with ASD/DD. Children with ASD/DD have higher incidence of chronic conditions such as metabolic syndrome, mental health issues, and nutrition-related (GI) conditions than children without autism and/or related developmental disabilities, including diabetes and obesity. With rising prevalence of children with ASD/DD, there is a looming gap in medical providers trained to care for this population when they grow into adulthood. This class incorporates didactics as well as presentations from individuals with ASD/DD and their families across the lifespan, preparing future physicians to address the developmental, physical, and mental health outcomes of this population.

Outcomes/Impact: In 2025, 188 medical students participated in FY 2025. Evaluation study published demonstrating educational impact.



Scope: Bronx, New York

Direct Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37859424/>

Contact: Joanne F. Siegel, LCSW (josiegel@montefiore.org)

Parent Workshop 2025 - Keynote: Rising Voices, Creating Change: The Value of Community: This parent workshop brought together 103 families to address community building, advocacy, and support for children with developmental disabilities. The keynote presentation emphasized the value of 2 community connections in supporting child and family health outcomes, including nutrition, chronic disease prevention, and mental fitness. The workshop provided families with strategies and resources to support their children's overall health and development.

Outcome/Impact: 103 participants (parents and family members).

Scope: Bronx and surrounding New York City area

Contact: Lisa H. Shulman, MD (lshulman@montefiore.org)

Pediatric Feeding Disorders (PFD): Important Facts to Know – ADAPT: This continuing education training addresses pediatric feeding disorders, which disproportionately affect children with developmental disabilities and can lead to nutrition-related chronic health conditions if untreated. The training provided 159 professionals with current evidence-based information on assessment, intervention, and support for children with feeding difficulties. Content emphasized the importance of early identification and treatment to prevent malnutrition, failure to thrive, and associated chronic health conditions.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, 159 participants (professionals and community members).

Scope: Bronx and surrounding New York City area

Contact: Karen Bonuck, PhD (karen.bonuck@einsteinmed.edu) and Joanne Siegel, LCSW (josiegel@montefiore.org)

Medical Nutrition Therapy for Children with Developmental and Feeding Disorders: Medical Nutrition Therapy is provided by Keith T. Ayoob, Ed.D., a pediatric nutritionist and clinical practitioner and Director of the Nutrition Clinic at the Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Einstein and the Children's Hospital at Montefiore and focuses on eating behavior and dietary management related to conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders, pediatric feeding disorders, ARFID, and prevention and



treatment of childhood obesity and failure to thrive. Services are available only one day per month due to funding limitations, which necessitates a primary focus on evaluations.

Scope: Bronx, New York

Contact: Keith T. Ayoob, Ed.D. (ktayoob@msn.com)

Improving Nutrition for Children with Pediatric Feeding Disorders in the Bronx: The Rose F. Kennedy Center, Children's Evaluation & Rehabilitation Center at Montefiore, is an outpatient clinic providing evaluation and treatment for children with pediatric feeding disorders, including many with autism and other developmental disabilities, who lack access to feeding therapy due to long waitlists and a shortage of trained providers. Services are delivered through a structured 12-week feeding intervention cycle led by speech-language pathologists in collaboration with a nutritionist/with nutrition consult to address feeding skill deficits, sensory-based food selectivity, and nutrition adequacy. Caregiver education and coaching are core components, supporting improved feeding practices and participation in home and school mealtime routines. Early intervention promotes healthy growth and reduces nutrition-related health risks.

Outcome/Impact: Approximately 400 children are served annually. Families report increased confidence in supporting feeding and nutrition at home.

Scope: Bronx, New York

Contact: Ida Barresi, MA CCC-SLP (ibarresi@montefiore.org)

NY-Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

Virtual recreation opportunities, including the Erie Canal pathway challenge the SCDD co-developed, implemented, and hosted virtual recreation opportunities to complete the Erie Canal Pathway Challenge. This included the development of videos, social stories, and instructions on how to access adaptive equipment for physically completing the challenge.

Scope: Western and Upstate New York

Direct Link: <https://eriecanalway.org/explore/challenge/virtual/virtual-roc>

NY-Westchester Institute for Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Nutrition and School Food Actions Affecting Children: WIHD's Community Support Network provides technical assistance to school districts and community organizations



on accommodating students with disabilities who have diet-related needs (e.g., allergies, diabetes, celiac disease, feeding challenges) and on navigating school meal accommodations under Section 504 and IDEA. This activity supports MAHA priorities by promoting equitable access to healthy meals for children with special dietary needs.

Outcome/Impact: WIHD's CSN experiences approximately 1,000 technical assistance requests per year, serving almost 4,000 individuals, family members, and professionals.

Scope: Seven-county region of the Hudson Valley in New York.

Direct Link: <https://www.wihd.org/what-we-do/community-support-network/>

Nutrition & Chronic Disease Prevention: WIHD's Health Services program provides nutrition counseling to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in New York's Hudson Valley. Services focus on weight management and chronic disease prevention, including obesity and diabetes. This activity supports MAHA priorities by promoting healthy eating and reducing chronic disease risk among a vulnerable population.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, 662 clients made 3,080 visits for nutrition services.

Scope: New York's Hudson Valley

Direct Link: <https://www.wihd.org/what-we-do/adult-health-services/>

OH-The Nisonger Center, UCEDD/LEND and OH-University of Cincinnati UCE, UCEDD/LEND

With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Cincinnati UCEDD and The Ohio State University Nisonger Center collaborate with five Ohio Centers for Independent Living to implement Living Well in the Community. Living Well in the Community is a 10-week program grounded in Independent Living philosophy that can help people set and achieve quality-of-life goals while building skills to improve health and wellness. The program helps adults with disabilities develop healthy living habits to live a meaningful, rich life.

Outcomes/Impact: Since 2021, 75 Ohioans with disabilities enrolled in this program, 58 of whom completed at least 8 of the 10 sessions. A majority of participants (more than 90%) strongly agreed or agreed that, because of the workshop, they learned to: set life goals to work towards a better life, identify and solve problems when trying to meet life goals, talk about their feelings, needs, and problems so they can do what they want with their life, find new information that can help them take action to meet their life goals,



make healthy food choices and know why health food choices can keep them healthy, know why participation in physical activity can keep them healthy, and speak for themselves to get their needs met.

Scope: Ohio state-wide initiative

Direct Link: <https://healthycommunityliving.com/hcl/lwc-session/home/>

Contact: Erica Harris (erica.harris@cchmc.org)

OR-Center for Excellence in Disabilities, UCEDD

The Collaborative Caregiving Community brings parents and caregivers of children with disabilities together with trusted health care providers for practical, family-centered learning and support. Through interactive workshops and webinars, families gain everyday tools, expert insight, and meaningful peer connection to navigate challenges such as behavior, feeding, routines, and family life. Recent highlights include workshops that focused on the reasons behind big behaviors and sharing, improving mealtime participation and enjoyment for children with and without disabilities, and practical ideas to build structure, manage behaviors, and create positive family time in the summer when school is out.

Outcome/Impact: These sessions help families feel more prepared, empowered, and supported in everyday routines. In 2026, the program will expand virtual offerings and reach more families statewide, strengthening caregiver confidence and children's well-being.

Scope: Oregon statewide.

Direct Link: <https://www.ohsu.edu/university-center-excellence-development-disability/collaborative-caregiving-community>

Contact: Rachel Benson, MSW (bensonra@ohsu.edu)

The Community Grant Program supports grassroots, community-driven projects that strengthen health and wellness for children and adults with disabilities across Oregon. Grants focus on practical, local solutions that address the root causes of chronic disease—expanding access to whole, healthy foods, increasing opportunities for movement and time in nature, reducing loneliness through in-person connection, and supporting strong, resilient families.

Outcome/Impact: Since 2013, the program has awarded 62 grants, reaching more than 5,000 Oregonians. Projects have spanned a wide range of wellness priorities, including



physical activity (16 projects), family support (11), spirituality (9), nutrition (6), self-advocacy (6), mental health (5), and other identified topics. Together, these initiatives create healthier environments, strengthen social connection, and empower communities to lead change. In 2026, the program aims to grow its statewide reach, deepen partnerships, and scale proven strategies that support thriving, connected communities across Oregon.

Scope: Oregon state-wide initiative

Direct Link: <https://www.ohsu.edu/university-center-excellence-development-disability/community-engagement-grant-program>

Contact: Larissa Yoshino, MPH (Yoshino@ohsu.edu)

TN-Vanderbilt University, UCEDD/LEND

Boosting the Use of the IDD Toolkit to Enhance Health Outcomes for Adults with IDD:
The IDD Toolkit project is a multi-year project focused on increasing the use of a website of resources and tools for the primary health and mental health care of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Through increasing the use of the IDD Toolkit, we hope to improve the health outcomes for adults with IDD. In year one, we conducted focus groups across the United States with primary care clinicians and family members of adults with IDD and we also conducted interviews with adults with IDD. In year two, we will use our findings from year one to develop a robust training campaign that will include easily accessible training content for clinicians and medical students, while also developing multimedia resources accessible for patients with IDD and their support persons.

Direct Link: www.iddtoolkit.org

Contact: Janet Shouse (janet.shouse@vumc.org) and Verity Rodrigues (Verity.Rodrigues@vumc.org).

TX-Center on Disability and Development, UCEDD

Aggie ACHIEVE (comprehensive PSE program for IDD) is a four-year comprehensive postsecondary training program. To support ACHIEVE students participate in a weekly required Independent Living Seminar to increase their knowledge and application of daily living skills. Students learn how to cook, clean, financial planning/budgeting skills, and how to be a good roommate. Emphasis is placed on purchasing and preparing healthy meals and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and living environment. To support



successful application of wellness skills, students receive a combination of classroom and in-home instruction.

Outcome/Impact: 59 students served

Scope: Available on Texas A&M University's College Station campus to students from across the state.

Direct Link: <https://aggieachieve.tamu.edu/> and Healthy Cooking Topics and Outcomes

Contact: Anita Lang (alang@tamu.edu)

UT-Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice, UCEDD/LEND

PSP VISTA Service Project 2024 with the Utah Conservation Corps facilitates group activities with people with disabilities to teach landscaping and horticulture. Participants help with harvesting, fall cleanup, weeding and compost turning, deer fencing tune-up, seed harvesting and planted greens for a fall/greenhouse crop. UCC distribute their produce to the food pantries in Cache Valley.

Outcome/Impact: 17 people participated in 2024

Scope: Local

Contact: Matthew Wappett (wappett@usu.edu)

VI-Virgin Islands UCE, UCEDD

Sensitivity Awareness & The Importance of Breakfast and Daily Physical Activity is provided through the Food and Nutrition Agent and the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education staff of the SOA engaged members of the Independent Living Center in nutrition and physical activity-related activities. These included healthy food options for breakfast, nutritional information, serving sizes, and the option to eat locally grown fruits and vegetables. The second part of the training included sensitivity awareness around the ADA and creating different scenarios for the members to role play".

Impact: 13 people participated in 2026

Scope: University of the Virgin Islands- School of Agriculture (SOA), Cooperative Extension Services

Contact: Sharon Williams (sharon.williams@live.uvi.edu)



**WA-University of Washington Institute on Human Development and Disability,
UCEDD/LEND**

Nutrition Network: This network expands workforce capacity by maintaining a roster of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) trained specifically in care for children with special health care needs (CYSHCN). It provides technical assistance to school-based health centers and interdisciplinary feeding teams. The network facilitates transitions from hospital NICUs to home settings to strengthen feeding supports.

Outcome/Impact: Delivered 35+ events reaching hundreds of health professionals; supports at least 8 partner organizations statewide.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Mari Mazon, MS, RDN, CD (lilmaro@uw.edu)

Phenylketonuria (PKU) Clinic: This interdisciplinary clinic provides longitudinal follow-up and mentoring for children and adults with PKU to manage phenylalanine levels through personalized nutrition plans. It focuses on preventing chronic disability associated with this metabolic condition through diet management. The team includes geneticists, dietitians, and metabolic specialists.

Outcome/Impact: Served 152 individuals in the reporting year with 242 multidisciplinary encounters.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative and regional (Seattle based)

Contact: Beth Ogata, MS, RDN (bogata@uw.edu)

Feeding & Mealtime Therapy (UW Autism Center): This clinic provides interdisciplinary feeding therapy and parent coaching for children with complex dietary behaviors. It addresses developmental and nutritional needs in toddlers. The focus is on expanding dietary variety and ensuring adequate nutrition for children with sensory or behavioral feeding challenges.

Outcome/Impact: Part of UWAC clinical services which served 649 unique individuals total across all programs.

Scope: Seattle and Tacoma

Contact: UW Autism Center Staff (uwautism@uw.edu)



UWEP Stress Management Program: This program leverages weekly group workshops teaching breathing exercises, guided meditation, and adaptive coping strategies. It addresses chronic stress (a MAHA driver) by helping participants identify personal stressors and practice relaxation. Content is co-developed with individuals with IDD to ensure relatability.

Outcome/Impact: New funding received from foundry10 to build this holistic support program.

Scope: Seattle / King County

Contact: Mark Harniss, PhD (mharniss@uw.edu)

WY-Wyoming Institute for Disabilities, UCEDD

UW ECHO in Student Health: The University of Wyoming's Project ECHO is a statewide training and capacity-building program that fosters inter-professional collaboration and best practice implementation through virtual networks. Each ECHO session includes expert presentations, problem-solving support, and resource sharing to strengthen knowledge in health, education, family, and disability services. ECHO in Student Health provides ongoing support for school nurses and other professionals working to enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of P-12 school-aged students. During the Fall 2024 – Spring 2025 topics addressed supporting students with diabetes, diabetes technology, epileptic and non-epileptic seizures, caffeine and energy drinks, and substance use.

Outcome/Impact: During the spring 2025 – fall 2025 40 people across 6 sessions.

Contact: Michelle Jarman (mjarman@uwyo.edu)

Living Well in the Community: WIND supports MAHA (Make America Healthy Again) priorities by strengthening community-based programs that promote health, independence, and well-being for people with disabilities across Wyoming. We partner with and support community living agencies by providing facilitation, training, technical assistance, and outreach to implement Living Well in the Community programs. These programs build healthy habits, encourage physical activity, support mental and emotional well-being, and strengthen social connections—key drivers of prevention and long-term health. By empowering individuals to set goals, manage their health, and actively participate in their communities, WIND helps reduce health disparities and supports sustainable, person-centered wellness.



Outcome/Impact: WIND delivered 5 facilitation sessions and 5 technical assistance sessions to community living agencies statewide to implement Living Well in the Community programs that advance health, independence, and community engagement.

Contact: Michelle Jarman (mjarman@uwyo.edu)

2.0 Mental Health

AL-Civitan International Research Center, UCEDD/LEND

The Regional Autism Network, which operates within the UCEDD, provides community education workshops for families and providers focused on supporting co-occurring mental health diagnoses (e.g., anxiety, depression, challenging behaviors) as well as improved sleep among autistic children and youth to promote wellness and quality of life among children and families.

Outcome/Impact: These workshops were attended by 120+ community members in 2025 and will be offered again in 2026.

Contact: Sarah O'Kelley (sokelley@uab.edu)

AR-University of Arkansas Partners, UCEDD/LEND

School and Community Nutrition and Fitness Initiatives (Safety and Sexual Violence Prevention Project) promote efforts that help prevent the critical problem of rape and sexual assault among people with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: Recently, we took a more community-based approach and given the level of poverty and food insecurity prevalent across our state, the team decided to provide "blessing boxes" which allows for the donation and collection of food.

Scope: Arkansas state-wide initiative

Direct Link: <https://uofapartners.uark.edu/projects/sexual-violence-prevention/>

Contact: Karan Burnette (kbburnet@uark.edu)

CA-UC Davis at the MIND Institute, UCEDD/LEND

The ACCESS Program is designed for adults with autism. ACCESS stands for Acquiring Career, Coping, Executive Function and Social Skills. The groups are led by a licensed psychologist and several adult co-leaders. Parent participation is also required (adult



participants may bring a friend or caregiver instead of a parent); the parent group meets at the same time as the children's group and is led by a qualified staff member or a licensed psychologist. Covered topics include nonverbal behavior cues, emotion recognition, stress management, conversation rules, social recognition, problem solving, making good choices, and friendship and leadership skills. This empowers adults with autism to access opportunities in social settings, work or education, and the community.

Outcome/Impact: 44 individuals participated in the ACCESS Program in the 2024-2025 program year. The promising results of this study were published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.

Scope: The majority of participants in the ACCESS Program reside in the greater Sacramento region.

Direct Link: Visit <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/clinic/social-skills/access>

Contact: Nicki Rodriguez at 916-703-0411 or (mindsocialskills@health.ucdavis.edu)

ECHO Autism is an interdisciplinary learning series that offers training on evidence-based practices and teaching through case-based discussion. The ECHO model has been shown to increase knowledge and confidence in providing care to individuals with autism and other neurodevelopmental disabilities. ECHO Autism topics rotate throughout the year. Examples of topics include ECHO Autism: Mental Health; ECHO Autism: Primary Care Providers; ECHO Autism: Early Intervention.

Outcome/Impact: Participants in the ECHO Autism program in the 2024-2025 program year: 200

Scope: ECHO Autism is conducted in an all-virtual format. Participation is open to individuals from all parts of the US and internationally.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/education/echo/> for more information.

Contact: Nicki Rodriguez at 916-703-0441 or (nsrodriguez@health.ucdavis.edu)

Developmental Playgroups for Children with Exceptional Needs Program: The playgroups create social and learning opportunities geared to families and children with exceptional needs which can include neurodevelopmental, physical or other disabilities or chronic illness. The playgroups are free and are for children aged 0 to 5. In addition to providing social connection and interaction, groups offer an evidence-based



framework that centers on play, promotes positive psychosocial development, and disseminate information on various topics such as the impacts of screen-time and nutrition on development. Playgroups are run by UC Davis MIND Institute staff who are experts in early childhood development in partnership with Sacramento Public Library, La Familia and First 5 Sacramento.

Outcome/Impact: 50 families and children participated in the 2024-2025 program year.

Scope: Groups meet at locations in Sacramento, CA and nearby Elk Grove, CA

Contact: Melissa Mello, Psy.D., M.A., BCBA at (916) 703-0402 or (mmello@ucdavis.edu)

Direct link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/news/headlines/playgroups-where-children-with-exceptional-needs-can-fully-be-themselves/2025/01>

CA-USC, Childrens Hospital, UCEDD/LEND

Pediatric Mental Health Making Friends & Staying Safe: 100 participants per year- Individuals with IDD Making Friends and Staying Safe Children's Group is a time-limited group that provides education and training in the areas of social skill development and abuse prevention for children with developmental disabilities. The need for this type of intervention is supported by research which indicates children with developmental disabilities are abused at rates 2-10 times higher than their typically developing peers. The core curriculum of the program covers the following topics: 1) Feelings. 2) Self Esteem. 3) Body Parts. 4) Puberty/Sex Education. 5) Abuse Each of these components is critical to abuse prevention.

Outcome/Impact: 150 individuals per year & support for people with Autism.

Contact: Larry Yin (lyin@chla.usc.edu)

DC-Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Future Planning Initiative to Reduce Family Strain (Washington, DC) through DC's Bridging Aging and Disability Networks Community of Practice, GUCEDD partners with the DC Developmental Disabilities Council on a future planning initiative. The GUCEDD's involvement is co-led by senior policy associate, Robin Shaffert. The initiative trains professionals in DC's aging and disability networks to support families that include aging caregivers 60 and over of adults with IDD to plan for the time when the caregivers will no longer be able to provide support. Future planning navigators support families to help caregivers and adults with IDD overcome fear and other barriers



that prevent families from planning as well as to help families understand and navigate available federal and DC resources.

Outcome/Impact: By strengthening caregiver knowledge and coordination across systems, the initiative helps reduce uncertainty, stress, and strain on families over time. This work is currently active and continuing into 2026 and aligns with MAHA priorities related to prevention, family well-being, and long-term health planning.

Scope: Washington, DC

Contact: Robin Shaffert (rls160@georgetown.edu)

School-Based Mental Health Awareness and Workforce Support for Staff supporting students with IDD (Washington, DC) Through its Dedicated/Direct Aide (DA) workforce initiatives in partnership with Georgetown/MedStar Center for Well-being in School Environments (WISE), Georgetown University UCEDD advances mental health awareness in school settings by strengthening the capacity of frontline staff who support students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in DC's public and public charter schools. The initiative includes DAs from multiple public education settings in DC and focuses on helping DAs recognize stress, communication differences, and environmental factors that affect the emotional well-being of students with IDD, while promoting supportive and predictable school environments. Ongoing, training and reflective practice opportunities emphasize prevention, relationship-based support, and staff well-being to improve continuity of support for students with high support needs.

Outcome/Impact: This work is currently active and continuing into 2026.

Scope: Washington, DC

Contact: Pamala Trivedi (pat33@georgetown.edu)

FL-Mailman Center for Child Development, UCEDD/LEND

Team COACH: The University of Miami (UM) Team Children Optimally Achieving Comprehensive Health (COACH) program supports The Children's Trust-funded parenting programs and staff across Miami-Dade County by providing evidence-based, engaging training, coaching, and professional support. Funded by The Children's Trust, Team COACH works closely with the Trust to develop services that strengthen providers and improve outcomes for children and families to ensure every child has the foundation to reach their full potential.



Outcome/Impact: On average 30 providers received coaching each year, focusing on skill-building, problem-solving barriers, and achieving program goals. Coaching improved provider capacity, resulting in better recruitment, engagement, and retention, ultimately benefiting the families they serve. Team COACH holds 25 monthly CoPs per year with an average of 10 providers per session on topics such as stress management, family engagement, and hybrid service delivery. CoPs strengthened provider networks, improved program implementation, and directly enhanced services for families. More than 80 providers engage in virtual and hybrid live trainings and online courses to build provider knowledge and skills across Trust-funded parenting programs. Additionally, Team COACH developed 15 online courses covering topics such as stress management, family engagement, and mental health service delivery. These trainings and courses increased provider capacity, supported effective program implementation, and improved services for families.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Dainelys Garcia at (ngarcia09@miami.edu) or 305-298-1287

Direct Link: <https://miami.box.com/s/drhqxtnarlcoqx2m3nkiy66wqcu4x5x8>,
https://collabornation.net/sl/event_details/88831, and
https://collabornation.net/sl/event_details/91662

Families First: Housed within the University of Miami Perinatal CARE Program, Families First strengthens the resilience of vulnerable families through evidence-based parenting services for children aged birth to three. Using the Incredible Years curriculum, the program offers weekly sessions focused on attachment, positive discipline, and child development in both English and Spanish. These services target high-need populations, such as teen parents and families in the dependency system, through a network of over 20 collaborative community partners. To ensure equitable access, sessions are held at flexible times in convenient locations with options for in-person or hybrid attendance. The program further supports participants by providing essential resources like childcare, transportation assistance, meals, and educational materials to help families practice new skills at home.

Outcome/Impact: Incredible Years Parents and Babies Group Parenting Curricula: 243 recruited and 99% met requirements. Incredible Years Toddler Group Parenting Curricula: 175 recruited and 79% met requirements

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Elana Mansoor at (emansoor@med.miami.edu) or 305-542-9863



Direct Link: [https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/pediatrics/developmental-and-behavioral-health-\(pediatrics\)/mailman-center-services/families-first](https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/pediatrics/developmental-and-behavioral-health-(pediatrics)/mailman-center-services/families-first)

Jump Start on the Go: This program is designed to develop and test the effectiveness of mental health consultation program accessible via a mobile application.

Outcome/Impact: Jump Start on the Go was designed to develop a more accessible mode of engaging in mental health consultation. We have beta tested the app with 20 childcare centers and will be rolling out the app to an additional 100 childcare centers this year.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Ruby Natale at (rnatale@med.miami.edu) or 954-552-0446

Direct Link: <https://jumpstartonthego.com/>

Parenting+: Implement Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and HealthySteps to approximately 2,000 families each year. PCIT provides live coaching of parent child interactions to improve child disruptive behavior and HealthySteps provides developmental and social emotional screening, anticipatory guidance, and consultation and liaison services to children birth to age 3 years.

Outcome/Impact: PCIT serves >350 families (including children with ASD) annually resulting in 91% of treatment completers experiencing clinical reductions in their children disruptive behaviors. HealthySteps serves over 1,600 families annually within 3 pediatric practices and effectively links children to early intervention services when needs are identified.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Jason Jent at (jjent@miami.edu) or 305-243-6857

Direct Link: [https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/pediatrics/developmental-and-behavioral-health-\(pediatrics\)/mailman-center-services/parent-child-interaction-therapy](https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/pediatrics/developmental-and-behavioral-health-(pediatrics)/mailman-center-services/parent-child-interaction-therapy)

VR Regulators: VR simulations were developed to teach caregivers and professionals who interaction with young children on how to effectively manage strong emotions from young children including: temper tantrums, separation anxiety, and social anxiety.



Outcome/Impact: Over 100 professionals and caregivers tested the simulations. Participants reported an immediate increase in intent to use evidence-based strategies when managing young children's strong emotions.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Jason Jent at (jjent@miami.edu) or 305-243-6857

School Health Initiative Mental Health Services: The School Health Initiative (SHI) is a school-based partnership with an academic health center in Miami-Dade County. The mission of the SHI is to provide integrated high-quality acute and preventative healthcare.

Outcome/Impact: The School Health Initiative (SHI) Mental Health Program provides mental health consultations, individual counseling, group counseling, and educational sessions to students enrolled in the 14 schools our program is at.

Scope: 14 schools in Miami-Dade County

Contact: Elizabeth Pulgaron at (epulgaron@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6857

Direct Link: <https://umiamihealth.org/en/treatments-and-services/pediatrics/uhealth-community-pediatrics-program/school-health-initiative>

School Champion Program: This project aims to develop, implement, and evaluate a pilot peer-led prevention program on suicide awareness and emotional wellness.

Outcome/Impact: A prevention program will be co-designed with students ("Student Champions") using a community based participatory research (CBPR) approach, through their involvement with the CHAMPIONS (Creating Health Advocates, Maximizing Potential in Our Neighborhood Schools) program at their school-based health center. Thirty Student Champions will be recruited at a local high school that has a University of Miami school-based health center on site.

Scope: North Miami Senior High School

Contact: Elizabeth Pulgaron at (epulgaron@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6857

Jump Start Early Childhood: The Jump Start ECC Program is a partnership between The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County, the University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development, and a team of community providers that specialize in early childhood development; Family Central, Inc., Jewish Community Services of South



Florida, and Community Health of South Florida, Inc. Using culturally-sensitive techniques grounded in decades of research, we developed toolkits for early learning program directors and teachers to help them manage challenging behaviors and promote children's development.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Ruby Natale at (rnatale@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-4617

Jump Start: Program funded by the Children's Trust and NICHD to deliver mental health consultation to childcare centers.

Outcome/Impact: Jump Start has been successfully implemented in over 800 childcare centers in the past 8 years impacting over 20,000 children. We deliver multilevel mental health consultation at the program-level, classroom-level, and child-level using the Georgetown model of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC).

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Ruby Natale at (rnatale@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-4617

Early Discovery: Program funded by The Children's Trust to provide early intervention services to children ages 0-5 who do not meet criteria for Part B or Part C services.

Outcome/impact: Early Discovery currently serves 540 children each year. The program has been funded for 14 years and has provided direct early intervention services to over 5,000 children. We provide speech therapy, occupational therapy, developmental intervention, and behavior therapy within the community including childcare centers and family's homes.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Ruby Natale at (rnatale@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-4617

Nurturing Parenting for Families of Children with Special Needs at Linda Ray Intervention Center designed to help families explore their hopes and challenges and recognize opportunities for celebration. The Nurturing Parenting Programs are trauma-informed, family-based programs designed for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Parents and their children learn positive and caring nurturing skills as a family. The center utilizes the evidence-based model, The Nurturing Program for Parents and their Children with Special Needs and Health Challenges. The program



recognizes that each family has a unique history, value system, cultural identity, and combination of strengths and challenges and is based on the conceptual framework for Nurturing Programs: 1) Appropriate Parental expectations 2) Empathetic awareness of the needs of children 3) Understanding and using empathetic, effective discipline strategies and behavior encouragement techniques 4) Understanding appropriate parent-child roles and responsibilities 5) Development of power and independence in children 6) There is no program cost to participating families, thanks to the generous funding of The Children's Trust.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Daniel Messinger at (dmessinger@miami.edu) or 305-284-8443

Direct Link: <https://lindaraycenter.miami.edu/parenting/>

Student Emerging Leaders Program (SELP): The Student Emerging Leaders Program (SELP) seeks to create and sustain an experiential program for high school students on leadership, awareness, and exposure to health care professions related to intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) populations and to teach them strategies to create systems-level change.

Outcome/Impact: Each year a cohort of 8-10 students will complete the training. Nine cohorts have completed thus far, totaling 54 students. Each year, cohorts will complete a community service action project to expose high school students from underserved communities to workforce development in the health care field, specifically in the area of I/DD-NDD.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Shelly Baer at (rbaer@med.miami.edu) or 305-689-7058

Direct Link: <https://med.miami.edu/centers-and-institutes/mailman-center/education/leadership-training-opportunities/selp>

Self-Advocate Leadership Training (SALT): The Self-Advocate Leadership Training program (SALT) aims to teach a leadership skills curriculum to individuals with disabilities so that they can learn strategies to advocate for themselves and others and to effect larger systems-level change.

Outcome/Impact: Three-day intensive curriculum on: Disability history and civil rights, self-advocacy, values, Self-determination, Communication, Problem solving, Legislative advocacy, Knowing Your Rights, Interdependence/power, alone vs. together, Check-in



groups, Opportunity to mentor/become a SALT trainer. Two cohorts of 8-10 adults per year. We've had 16 cohorts. One hundred thirty adults have completed the program thus far.

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Shelly Baer at (rbaer@med.miami.edu) or 305-689-

Direct Link: <https://med.miami.edu/centers-and-institutes/mailman-center/education/leadership-training-opportunities/salt>

IL-Institute on Disability & Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

HealthMatters™ Program: People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face persistent barriers to healthy nutrition, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention, contributing to disproportionately high rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and related conditions. These disparities directly affect independence, workforce participation, and long-term health outcomes. In alignment with Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) priorities related to nutrition, fitness, chronic disease prevention, and public awareness, the HealthMatters™ Program (ACL Title III-D of the Older Americans Act approved list) at the Institute on Disability and Human Development (Illinois' UCEDD), University of Illinois Chicago, delivers evidence-based health education and lifestyle programming for people with IDD across the lifespan. This work advances MAHA-consistent strategies that connect healthy lifestyles, functional capacity, and economic participation for people with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: Over 20 years of research and implementation, HealthMatters™ Program has certified more than 4,000 instructors from over 450 organizations across 37 states, supporting the sustainable replication of its programs through staff training, organizational wellness initiatives, and community-based education delivering the program to over 15,000 individuals with IDD. Program outcomes demonstrate significant improvements in nutrition knowledge, physical activity, and health-related behaviors, accompanied by strong participant engagement and low attrition rates. Increasingly, HealthMatters™ Program is integrated into inclusive local public health programs and post-secondary education and workforce transition programs, such as Project SEARCH, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), Ag Extensions, to support healthier routines, self-management skills, and job readiness among young adults with IDD. The enrollment in the HealthMatters™ Program is open twice per year (Winter/February and Fall/September).

Direct Link: <https://healthmattersprogram.org/virtual-coach-healthmatters/>.

Contact: Jasmina Sisirak, PhD, MPH (jsisirak@uic.edu)



MN-Institute on Community Integration, UCEDD/LEND

Teleoutreach Center (UCEDD and LEND) TeleOutreach Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Follow Up Clinic Family Support Modules: The University of Minnesota ICI team developed NICU Follow Up Family modules through collaboration with them NICU Follow Up Clinic, Department of Pediatrics, and the Birth to Three Clinic. The modules include brief, family focused videos and related resources that include infant nutrition and feedings after discharge from the NICU.

Outcome/Impact: The modules are embedded into an online family portal which begins pilot testing with families in February, 2026.

Scope: Minnesota.

Contact: Jessica Simacek, sima0034@umn.edu

MS-Institute for Disability Studies, UCEDD

The Family Advocacy Network (FAN) expands access to community-based peer support for families of children receiving special education services in Mississippi public schools, with a focus on students with social, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. FAN empowers families and students to actively participate in the development and meaningful implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs). The program provides education and support to families and education professionals on mandated special education policies, procedures, and rights, strengthening self-advocacy and informed decision-making. Families receive individualized, one-on-one assistance, including document review, identification of red flags, navigation of procedural safeguards, and direct advocacy during IEP meetings. FAN is funded through a collaborative grant with the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, with additional support from the Administration on Community Living. The program promotes stronger behavioral and academic outcomes while reducing stress for families navigating complex systems. FAN aligns with MAHA's Public Awareness and Education priorities and supports mental health by addressing students' social-emotional needs.

Outcome/Impact: 157 families of children and youth with disabilities

Scope: Mississippi-Statewide

Contact: Leslie LaVergne, PhD, Associate Director, at (Leslie.LaVergne@usm.edu) or 601.266.6225





NJ-The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Training for Professionals, Families, and People with Disabilities: the Boggs Center provides competency-based training for professionals in the field of Developmental Disabilities services on an array of topics related to mental health and behavior supports. While the target audience for most of these training is professionals, they are also open to people with disabilities and families. Trainings address topics including Positive Behavior Support, Functional Behavior Assessment, Trauma Informed Supports and Recovery, Autism and Co-occurring Anxiety Disorders, Psychopharmacology and Autism, Aggressive Behavior, Facilitating Transitions from Inpatient to Home/Residential Settings, Repetitive Behaviors in Autism and OCD, Depression and IDD, Positive Psychology, Promoting Relaxation, etc. Additional topics are added based on community need.

Outcome/Impact: 198 Training sessions conducted across FY25 – FY26 to date; 5265 people trained; 97% of participants reporting increased knowledge as a result of the training

Scope: New Jersey state-wide initiative

Contact: Colleen McLaughlin, MEd (colleen.mclaughlin@rutgers.edu)

NY-Rose F. Kennedy Center, UCEDD/LEND

Implementing Suicide Screening and Assessment for Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities in an Urban Multidisciplinary Center: This quality improvement initiative, ongoing since November 2023, implemented universal suicide screening for adolescents with developmental disabilities using the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ), followed by SAFE-T assessment and safety planning for positive screens. Baseline data showed inconsistent screening and incomplete suicide risk assessments. Through clinician education, brief required training, and workflow optimization using Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, completion of standardized suicide risk assessment improved from 59% to 100% among those screening positive. Screening rates remained high post intervention, demonstrating that universal suicide screening in this population is feasible and sustainable in an urban multidisciplinary setting. Ongoing efforts focus on addressing time-related barriers and maintaining improvements.

Scope: New York (Bronx, Westchester County, Manhattan)

Contact: Maria Valicenti-McDermott, MD, MS (mvalicen@montefiore.org)





Bronx Community Self-Advocacy Group Weekly meetings, ongoing through FY 2025: This empowerment-based peer-run group of 15 adults with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD) meets weekly on Thursdays from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM to explore housing, work, and social opportunities and issues to help achieve personal goals. The group provides a supportive environment for adults with ASD/DD to develop self-advocacy skills and work toward independent living goals. This activity promotes mental fitness, community engagement, and self-determination.

Outcome/Impact: 15 adults with ASD/DD participate weekly (approximately 1.5 hours per week, 52 weeks)

Scope: Bronx, New York

Contact: Joanne F. Siegel, LCSW (josiegel@montefiore.org)

Project Title: Bronx Community Self-Advocacy Group Dinner and a Movie Night Social: This peer-run social activity is a weekly remote event in which adults with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD) meet over “dinner” to watch a movie together and discuss the movie and any other happenings within their communities and lives. The activity reduces social isolation, promotes peer connection, and supports mental fitness for adults with disabilities. This accessible virtual format allows participants to engage from home while building community.

Outcome/Impact: Ongoing weekly participation by adults with ASD/DD.

Scope: Bronx, New York (virtual/remote participation)

Contact: Joanne F. Siegel, LCSW (josiegel@montefiore.org)

NY-Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

SCDD partners with Special Olympics to recruit event participants, and our medical students and Fellows assist with conducting health screenings through the Healthy Athletes program.

Outcome/impact: Screenings are typically conducted with over 2,000 athletes per year.

Scope: Our Special Olympics partners are the Genesee Region, which covers the Finger Lakes counties in Western New York.

Direct Link: <https://www.specialolympics-ny.org/community/health-wellness/>



Community Health Events are events our Center participates in and table at various health-related events throughout the year, including health for college students, inclusive recreation events for children with disabilities, and physical/ mental health supports for children in early intervention.

Outcome/Impact: in 2025 we disseminated information to over 20,000 community participants.

Scope: These events occur throughout Western New York

Contact: Suzannah Iadarola (Suzannah_ladarola@urmc.rochester.edu)

The Advancing Supportive Care through Education for Nurses on Disabilities (ASCEND) project provides mental and physical health support for children on inpatient units and in the ED through nurse training programs. We train nurses in how to best keep patients with disabilities and co-occurring mental health conditions healthy in the hospital. Training for nurses included disability-specific didactics and in-vivo simulations on disability-specific cases.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, we trained over 2,000 nurses on didactics and over 220 nurses on simulations.

Scope: At present, we trained nurses in Rochester; we are about to scale up to hospitals across New York State. Participants have shown improvements in clinical knowledge, clinical comfort, and organizational climate.

Direct Link: <https://cdd.ny.gov/ascend-advancing-supportive-care-through-education-nurses-disabilities>

Mental health support for children with disabilities through school consultation, webinars, and community education. We provide contracted and grant-funded educational sessions and consultation to support mental health in people with disabilities, as well as children with emotional behavioral disorders in schools.

Outcome/Impact: This includes contracts with 31 school districts, the NYS Office of Mental Health, and community presentations to over 20 agencies per year. In 2024-2025 we provided trainings to over 500 providers and 200 educators.

Scope: Some services are restricted to Western/ Upstate New York, and some are statewide.

Contact: Suzannah Iadarola (Suzannah_ladarola@urmc.rochester.edu)



NY-Westchester Institute for Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Mental Health Focus (General) WIHD’s Health Services program provides primary and medical specialty services, including integrated behavioral health, to approximately 5,000 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities each year, most of whom live in congregate settings in the seven-county region of the Hudson Valley in New York (Westchester, Orange, Ulster, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Sullivan). This activity supports MAHA priorities by improving access to mental health care for individuals with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: In 2025, over 750 clients made 4,085 visits for psychiatry and 88 clients made 1,892 visits for psychology.

Scope: New York Hudson Valley

Direct Link: <https://www.wihd.org/what-we-do/adult-health-services/>

OR- Center for Excellence in Disabilities, UCEDD

The Taking Charge of My Healthcare Toolkit continues to equip people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to play an active role in their own care. Co-created by Oregon self-advocates and health care experts, the toolkit builds real-world skills—speaking up during appointments, asking questions, making informed decisions, and finding providers who listen and respect their needs. The materials are designed for individuals, families, and supporters and are offered in easy-to-use formats including videos, worksheets, guides, and printable tools for preparing for appointments and navigating care.

Outcome/Impact: Web analytics data shows over 19,000 webpage views, over 5000 video views and nearly 10,000 material downloads to date. This resource helps people move from “patient” to “partner,” strengthening confidence and decision-making in everyday health care situations. In 2026, the program will continue expanding and updating toolkit resources and disseminate the training model to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities in 2026 to reach more communities and support more Oregonians in taking charge of their own health.

Direct Link: <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health/taking-charge-my-health-care-toolkit>

Contact: Rhonda Eppelsheimer, MSW (eppelshe@ohsu.edu)





TN-Vanderbilt University, UCEDD/LEND

Supporting School Re-entry for Children in State Custody with Co-occurring Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Needs: The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center UCEDD is partnering with Tennessee's Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) and Tennessee's Department of Education (DOE) to provide behavior analytic and mental health support to approximately 40 students who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and significant mental and behavioral health needs. These students are currently not able to attend school safely due to frequent and severe challenging behavior. The goal of this project is to increase the quality of life for these students by developing evidence-based, individualized support plans focused on social and academic engagement in the least restrictive environment. This project is currently in development and will initially be serving individuals in the middle Tennessee region.

Contact: John Staubitz (John.Staubitz@vumc.org)

TX-Center on Disability and Development, UCEDD

PATHS (Postsecondary Access and Training in Human Services): To address wellness and mental health for young professionals with disabilities, the Center on Disability and Development's PATHS (Postsecondary Access and Training for Human Services) program has added a Healthy Living Seminar. This course is taught each fall and addresses the eight dimensions of wellness (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, financial, and environmental), with an emphasis on healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health.

Outcome/Impact: It has served 36 students to date. All 36 students also complete Mental Health First Aid training to support their wellness while empowering them to support preschool and K-12 students, as well as individuals with disabilities in the community or residential settings. 100% of Fall 2025 students either agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the course and that the information will improve their professional work. Beginning in January 2026, a new peer support group will meet monthly to support students' mental health, stress management, and self-regulation.

Scope: Available on Texas A&M University's College Station campus to students from across the state.

Direct Link: [Paths.tamu.edu](https://tamucs-my.sharepoint.com/personal/robin_miller_tamu_edu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Frobin%5Fmiller%5Ftamu%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FDocuments%2FPATHS%2FDimensions%20of%20Health%20and%20Wellness%2Epdf&parent=%2Fperson) and https://tamucs-my.sharepoint.com/personal/robin_miller_tamu_edu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Frobin%5Fmiller%5Ftamu%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FDocuments%2FPATHS%2FDimensions%20of%20Health%20and%20Wellness%2Epdf&parent=%2Fperson



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Contact: Leticia LaSota (llasota@tamu.edu)

TX-Texas Center for Disability Studies, UCEDD/LEND

The SOLVE was funded by the Moritz Center on Societal Impact and developed a protocol for solution focused brief therapy for autistic adults. We are currently conducting a train the trainer program for licensed therapists to use the protocol. This project is designed to address the mental health needs of individuals with autism.

Data/Outcomes: We are currently engaging 18 people in the study and conducted a smaller pilot with 5 people. We found that participants' quality of life, sense of identity, independent living and purpose improved after receiving the therapy.

Direct Link: <https://disabilitystudies.utexas.edu/solve>

Scope: Texas state-wide initiative

Contact: Sandy Magaña (smagana@austin.utexas.edu)

VA-Partnership for People with Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

VA UCEDD - Leadership and Empowerment for Abuse Prevention (LEAP), an evidence-based training initiative to reduce the risk of maltreatment among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), addresses the prevention of interpersonal trauma as a fundamental health intervention. By equipping individuals, families, and providers with tools to foster healthy relationships, the program prioritizes primary prevention over traditional, reactive crisis management.

Outcome/Impact: Over 1,700 people with IDD, families, and provider agencies have received LEAP training.

Contact: Parthy Dinora (padinora@vcu.edu)

Early Childhood Mental Health Virginia (ECMHVA) focuses on the development, implementation, and sustainability of a comprehensive "system of care" for the mental health of infants and children from birth through age six. The initiative aims to increase access to evidence-based services, including promotion, prevention, and clinical intervention, while supporting the professional workforce through specialized training and the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement. By fostering



partnerships across education, healthcare, and social services, ECMHVA ensures that Virginia's youngest children and their families have the relational and emotional support necessary for healthy development.

Outcome/Impact: The project has trained and supported over 5,000 professionals.

Contact: Parthy Dinora (padinora@vcu.edu)

Project Lotus hosts an online training series to help domestic violence and sexual assault service providers understand how to support people with disabilities who are accessing services while experiencing abuse.

Outcome/Impact: The Project has trained over 2,000 direct service providers.

Contact: Parthy Dinora (padinora@vcu.edu)

WA-University of Washington Institute on Human Development and Disability, UCEDD/LEND

ECHO IDD Psychiatric Care: This is a biweekly telehealth case conference where expert panels guide community providers on psychopharmacology decisions and behavioral interventions. It provides advanced training in diagnostic assessment to treat co-occurring mental health conditions in IDD youth. The goal is to increase provider confidence and reduce inappropriate medication use.

Outcome/Impact: 30–35 participants per session; approximately 300–350 engagements per year.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Jim Mancini jmancini@uw.edu

Adult Neurodevelopmental Wellness (ANeW) Project ANeW develops diversion programs for individuals found incompetent to stand trial due to IDD, facilitating discharge from state hospitals to community settings. An interdisciplinary team conducts baseline evaluations to design interventions addressing strengths and barriers. This project addresses the intersection of forensic mental health and developmental disability.

Outcome/Impact: Pilot evaluation with 8 participants showed successful discharges to supported living with marked improvements in daily living skills.



Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Gary Stobbe, MD (gastobbe@uw.edu)

ECHO Wraparound for IDD/ASD: This series uses a hybrid Wraparound model to enable teams to co-create individualized plans addressing behavioral, medical, and social needs. It focuses on preventing crises through family-centered care planning. Sessions allow for data-driven fidelity monitoring of complex cases. Outcome/Impact: 45–55 participants per session; 855–1,045 engagements per year.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Jim Mancini (jmancini@uw.edu)

WY-Wyoming Institute for Disabilities, UCEDD

ECHO Networks: The University of Wyoming's Project ECHO is a statewide training and capacity-building program that fosters inter-professional collaboration and best practice implementation through virtual networks. Each ECHO session includes expert presentations, problem-solving support, and resource sharing to strengthen knowledge in health, education, family, and disability services. The Integrative Care network focuses on improving patient-centered care by connecting primary care and behavioral health professionals to address mental health, substance abuse, and related health behaviors. Participants include a diverse group of healthcare providers such as physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, and counselors working together to enhance integrative care across Wyoming. Topics included: trauma-informed approaches to suicide prevention, documentation and crisis response plans, prevention and substance use disorders. Fall 2025 topics focused on Veteran mental health and primary care including chronic pain, traumatic brain injuries, insomnia, psychotropic interventions, and veteran specific risk factors for suicide and mental health.

Outcome/Impact: During Spring 2025 – 214 people attended across 11 sessions. During the fall of 2025 51 individuals attended across 8 sessions.

Scope: Wyoming state-wide initiative

Contact: Canyon Hardesty (canyon@uwyo.edu)

ECHO for Families: ECHO for Families provides opportunities for learning, advocacy, and mentorship with families that have a child with developmental disabilities, autism, or other special healthcare needs. Families receive professional support, brainstorm



evidence-based solutions, or share successes with other families around the state and nation. The 2024-2025 ECHO for Families series focused on mental health supports for caregivers and children with disabilities by strengthening knowledge of crisis prevention, emotional regulation, and therapeutic services with a focus on practical tools for immediate and long-term needs to foster resilience, well-being, and positive mental health outcomes.

Outcome/Impact: During Fall 2024 – Spring 2025 110 professionals and family members attended across 15 sessions. Protective Factors and Resilience During the fall of 2025 70 professionals and family members across 6 sessions.

Scope: Wyoming state-wide initiative with participants from across the nation

Contact: Canyon Hardesty (canyon@uwyo.edu)

Behavioral Health Aide Training: Curriculum development of a curriculum and asynchronous training program to support the behavioral health aid through Wind River Family and Community Health Care (WRFCHC). This program will be developed with WRFCHC, including Education Excellence, BHAT clinic staff, and WRFCHC behavioral health department. Topics include behavioral health, psycho-education, HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease, group psycho-education, and community approaches to prevention

Outcome/Impact: 24 people are currently engaged in the curriculum.

Scope: Wyoming state-wide initiative, including Wind River Indian Reservation

Contact: Canyon Hardesty (canyon@uwyo.edu)

Wyoming Telehealth Network (WyTN), a program empowered by WIND, initiatives advance MAHA priorities by expanding access to preventive, behavioral, and chronic disease care in rural and frontier communities. By strengthening telehealth infrastructure, workforce readiness, and system coordination, WyTN supports earlier intervention, improved care continuity, and reduced reliance on emergency services. These efforts improve population health while making healthcare delivery more efficient and accessible across Wyoming.

Outcome/Impact: WyTN delivered 13 telehealth webinars reaching 160 participants and supported three Special Interest Groups focused on Community Health and Chronic Disease Prevention, Hospital Administration, and Telemental Health. From April–June, WyTN convened three Wyoming Telehealth Consortium meetings (71 attendees), two



Steering Committee meetings, two Finance Committee meetings, and six SIG meetings engaging providers and health system leaders statewide

Scope: Wyoming state-wide initiative

Contact: Canyon Hardesty (canyon@uwyo.edu)

3.0 Research

AL-Civitan International Research Center, UCEDD/LEND

Several UCEDD faculty contributed expertise to development and interpretation of results for a student research project entitled, Environmental Exposure and Autism Spectrum Disorder Symptom Presentation: Investigating spatial patterns of metals and associated risk among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Alabama. The study focuses on potential environmental contributors to increased ASD symptom presentation, and the results of this study are in preparation/under review for publication.

Contact: Sarah O'Kelley (sokelley@uab.edu)

AZ-Institute for Human Development, UCEDD

Healthy Relationships: Through an AZ DD Planning Council grant-funded initiative focused on addressing sexual violence among people with IDD, members of the Sonoran Center completed Special Olympics Arizona training, qualifying them as facilitators of the Understanding Me: Healthy Relationships curriculum. Developed in collaboration with Special Olympics Arizona and Inclusive Health professionals, this curriculum serves as a resource for educating adults with IDD about sex education and healthy relationships. The four trained staff members, two of whom are self-advocates, will offer the course to community members in the spring 2026 semester and are also exploring a partnership with a local high school to provide the training to select students.

Contact: Loretta Alvarez, MSE (lalvarez@arizona.edu) and Celina Urquidez, MPH (celinau@arizona.edu)

CA-UC Davis at the MIND Institute, UCEDD/LEND

RE-CHARGE Study: In 2003, the CHARGE (Childhood Autism Risks from Genetics and Environment) Study began enrolling three groups of children aged 2-5 years with



autism; with other developmental delays; and from the general population with typical development. For the Re-CHARGE ECHO program, CHARGE children from all three diagnostic groups will be followed up between the ages of 8-20 to understand developmental trajectories for each of these three groups (baseline developmental delay, autism, or typical development at baseline).

Outcome/Impact: CHARGE has generated a body of new results on prenatal exposures, such as pesticides, air pollution, medications and maternal nutrition, in relation to autism and developmental delay.

Scope: Children from across the U.S. in all three diagnostic groups will be followed up between the ages of 8-20 with virtual and in-person participation at the MIND Institute in Sacramento, CA.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/research/children-autism-risk/> for more information.

Contact: Ashley Ratcliffe-Ikemiyagi at 916-703-0434 or (amratcliffe@ucdavis.edu)

The ECHO (Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes) Study brings together 45 cohorts of children from across the country, including The ReCHARGE Study at UC Davis. ECHO will study health broadly, including childhood asthma, other respiratory problems, obesity, diabetes, sleep, neuro-developmental conditions such as autism and ADHD, and birth outcomes like prematurity and birth defects. With data from over 50,000 children and caregiver participants, the ECHO study will help us understand how to improve health during childhood and beyond.

Outcomes/Impact: Findings from several ECHO studies on improving child health and development can be read here: <https://echochildren.org/participant-educational-resources/study-results/>. ECHO journal articles can be read here

<https://echochildren.org/echo-program-publications/> and here
<https://echochildren.org/research-summaries/>

Scope: The ECHO Study includes children from across the U.S.

Contact: Crystal Herrera, ReCHARGE Research Manager at 916-703-0421 or (csherrera@ucdavis.edu)

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/research/children-autism-risk/>

The Autism Research Consortium in Behavioral Health (ARC-BH) is an interdisciplinary network committed to translating high quality evidence-based autism practices into



public service systems. The project aims to (1) build research infrastructure to establish and maintain research tools and supports necessary for the successful coordination, implementation, and adaptation of organizational strategies in public service systems; (2) effectively share research findings with diverse audiences—both academic and non-academic— in partnership with our community stakeholders; and (3) mentor early career investigators and trainees from all backgrounds, creating a clear pathway for them to engage in impactful, community-partnered behavioral health and autism implementation research.

Scope: This project includes primary partners UCSD and UCLA and affiliate sites at UPenn, University of Rochester and UNC Chapel Hill in partnership with local communities.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/centers/arc-bh> for more information. Information about the Autism Research Consortium is here <https://theautismresearchfoundation.org/our-services/autism-research-consortium/>.

Contact: Aubyn C Stahmer, PhD, Principal Investigator at 916-703-1234 or (astahmer@health.ucdavis.edu) Project email: arc-bh@health.ucdavis.edu.

The Individualized Placement and Support for Autistic Adults (IPS-AUT) study is funded by an Employment Grant from the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS; Grant A22-334) to build evidence for Individualized Placement Support delivered in community settings. Engaging in meaningful work is one of the most important determinants of mental and physical health, and quality of life in all adults, yet the autism field still lacks a sustainable, scalable, and evidence-based supported employment model promoting competitive integrated employment (CIE) in community settings.

Outcome/Impacts: There are 28 RCTs assessing the effectiveness of IPS compared to other vocational programs for those with SMI and other conditions with all but one showing that IPS had the best outcomes. Approximately 55%-60% of participants receiving IPS achieved CIE versus 25% of those receiving traditional vocational rehabilitation services. Compared to controls, IPS participants gained employment faster, maintained employment 4x longer, and were 3x as likely to work 20 hours or more per week.

Scope: Study participants are in California.

Direct Link: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/mind-institute/research/cognitive-development/>

Contact: The Solomon Lab at 916-703-0339 or (solomonlab@ucdavis.edu)



CO-JFK Partners/University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, UCEDD/LEND

Joint Opportunities for Bridging Wellness, Integration of Community Services and Supported Employment (JOBWISE) project works to improve the transition from child to adult systems of care in healthcare, employment, and other support for youth and young adults between the ages of 14-26 with autism and an intellectual and/or developmental disability living in two counties in Colorado. JOBWISE will explore the impact of employment on overall health and thriving/quality of life. This study is ongoing.

Contact: Jessica Solomon Sanders, MD (jessica.sanders@childrenscolorado.org)

Direct Link: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/jfk-partners/research/JOBWISE>

Comparing Two School Based Interventions to Manage Anxiety in Autistic Students: Anxiety is common for autistic students and can interfere with academic performance, participation in extracurricular activities and social functioning. If untreated, anxiety can persist into adulthood contributing to other mental health issues. Many autistic students face difficulty accessing therapy outside of school due to lack of qualified providers and long wait lists. The purpose of this study is to compare two school based programs for anxiety (Facing Your Fears in Schools; Reaven & Blakeley-Smith, 2024; Zones of Regulation; Kuyper, 2011) in elementary and middle school autistic students and determine which one will do a better job. Outcome/Impact: Thus far we have trained over 150 school providers, from 78 school teams to work with 208 students. The study is ongoing with results expected in summer 2026.

Scope: Colorado and North Carolina state-wide initiative

Contact: Judy Reaven, PhD (judy.reaven@cuanchutz.edu)

Direct Link: <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/jfk-partners/research/FYFComparisonStudy>

Moving an Adapted CBT Intervention for Autistic Adolescents with Intellectual Disability and Anxiety from Research to Clinical Settings: There are very few evidence-based mental health resources for autistic teens with intellectual disability. Clinicians often struggle to help autistic teens with intellectual disability manage their anxiety because manualized, ready-to-use programs designed for this population are not available. The purpose of this study is to train psychologists and psychology trainees to deliver Facing Your Fears for Teens with Autism and Intellectual Disabilities (FYF-IDD) to teens and their families. Feedback will be gathered from both clinicians and families about



FYF:IDD to ensure that the program is practical, effective, and accessible so that more families can benefit from this tailored anxiety CBT intervention. Recruitment is occurring in Colorado. To date, 8 clinicians have been trained and up to 8 families have been served.

Contact: Audrey Blakeley-Smith, PhD (Audrey.blakeleysmith@cuanschutz.edu)

Direct Link: https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/jfk-partners/research/Facing_Fears_IDD_ASD

Exercise Intervention linked to altered social cognitive brain responses in autistic adolescents: The effects of exercise on social cognition and associated neurobiology in autistic adolescents have not yet been examined, although may hold promise for improving social cognitive functioning. The purpose of this pilot study was to determine if a 10 week exercise intervention compared to a gaming control condition was associated with changes in neuronal responses during a Theory of Mind task. Thirty-eight sedentary autistic youth were randomized to a 10 week exercise program or gaming control condition. Results are preliminary but indicated that exercise could serve as an accessible, low-cost approach for modulating social cognitive neurocircuitry in autistic youth. Additional research is needed to determine more conclusive findings.

Contact: Kristina T. Legget (Kristina.legget@cuanschutz.edu)

Direct Link: <https://www.uchealth.org/today/can-exercise-provide-a-boost-for-brain-and-body-in-teens-with-autism/>

CT-A. J. Pappanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

Analysis of the utility and feasibility of a free phone App developed by Young Athletes/Special Olympics to track and promote the motor development and fitness of young children (age 0-5) with disabilities, including Autism. The App was designed, then evaluated by the UCEDD, for families and caregivers to promote their infant and children's motor skills and other developmental skills.

Outcome/Impact: One hundred thirty-two families participated in Phase 1 of the evaluation, and 42 participated in Phase 2. All families reported that the app was useful, and those who used it at least once a week also reported improvements in their child's skills, and that the activities helped their child learn. Pilot tested with families/caregivers of infants and young children with IDD and Autism in

Scope: State-wide initiative in Ohio, Maryland, Mississippi and two African nations: Kenya and Zimbabwe.



Contact: Mary Elizabeth Bruder (bruder@uchc.edu) or Tara Lutz lutz@uchc.edu

Youth with autism and health; Secondary analysis of the 2023 National Survey of Children's Health. The existing survey data is being analyzed to understand the experiences of youth with autism and other developmental disabilities in health care settings.

Contact: Mary Elizabeth Bruder (bruder@uchc.edu) or Tara Lutz lutz@uchc.edu

Including disability in public health training programs. The UConn UCEDD provides technical assistance to Master of Public Health degree-granting programs within 5 CT Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). A baseline assessment of student knowledge, attitudes, and experiences with persons with disabilities (PWD) was conducted in spring 2025.

Impact/Outcome: The analyses of the assessment with 76 participants will be used to demonstrate the need for the inclusion of disability content in this program.

Scope: Connecticut state-wide initiative

Contact: Mary Elizabeth Bruder (bruder@uchc.edu) or Tara Lutz lutz@uchc.edu

CT needs assessment of local Health Department Directors about resources needed to serve children, youth, and adults with Autism and/or IDD in their community. A statewide needs assessment and training inquiry was conducted with the CT Directors of Local Health Departments/Districts (LHD).

Outcome/Impact: 76% of Directors (n=45) responded, and all identified needs for resources and training to expand their services to effectively include and provide services to those with disabilities and their families. Three training modules will be developed for the LHD staff, and face-to-face training and follow-up technical assistance will be provided.

Scope: Connecticut state-wide initiative

Contact: Mary Elizabeth Bruder (bruder@uchc.edu) or Tara Lutz lutz@uchc.edu

Access to health care for children and adults with disabilities, including RAutism. A survey about the health care experiences of 78 adults with disabilities in CT. Article about health care access and disparities published in Developmental Disabilities



Network Journal (2024), and discussed on the journal's podcast (May, 2025). The results were used to pass legislation improving access to medical equipment for those with disabilities in CT.

Outcome/Impact: A subsequent checklist was distributed 836 to health care facilities and 36,378 health care practitioners in CT.

Scope: Connecticut state-wide initiative

Contact: Mary Elizabeth Bruder (bruder@uchc.edu) or Tara Lutz (lutz@uchc.edu)

FL-Mailman Center for Child Development, UCEDD/LEND

IRB Study – Center for Orphan Disease (CODE): We propose to carry out research looking specifically at the genetic contributions to the development of orphan diseases, a rare disorders which affect fewer than 200,000 people in the United States. This study is focused on the identification of the genetic bases for various orphan diseases, the correlation of this data with phenotypic, molecular, and clinical data, and secondarily, the building of a biorepository of data, DNA, and tissue samples. Eligible participants may be of any age with any rare or unclassified diagnosis and their family members may enroll as well.

Scope: National

Contact: Pankaj Agrawal at (pagrawal@miami.edu) or 617-721-2262

IRB Study - MultiOmic Study of Anomalies without Identified Cause: The MOSAIC study aims to enroll 200 infants with a congenital disorder diagnosed either pre- or postnatally that does not have a known genetic cause. We will collect detailed phenotypic information and generate genomic, epigenomic, transcriptomic, and proteomic profiles by using blood (cord) at birth, blood (patient/parent peripheral) at 2-4 weeks or prior to discharge, tissue (placental) at birth, buccal (patient/parent prior to discharge), discarded surgical tissue (if applicable), discarded amniotic fluid (prior to delivery if applicable). Finally, we will evaluate infants with complex congenital anomalies, their outcomes, and correlate them with their multi-omics profiles seeking to determine a genetic cause.

Contact: Pankaj Agrawal at (pagrawal@miami.edu) or 617-721-2262

IRB Study - Genomic Studies for Rare and Undiagnosed Disorders: Genomic sequencing and analysis, such as exome and genome sequencing, have become an



increasingly common and important part of the diagnostic process in rare disease. However, many patients from all around the world continue not to have access to this technology. Further, upwards of 50% of sequenced cases remain undiagnosed after sequencing and initial analysis. We have developed a unique bioinformatic pipeline to reanalyze genomic data with the goal of increasing diagnostic yield. While this pipeline has been tested on a large number of locally enrolled cases, this protocol aims to utilize these methods on additional sets of de-identified genomic data obtained from collaborators, biobanks or registries to continue to improve the genomic analysis process.

Contact: Pankaj Agrawal at (pagrawal@miami.edu) or 617-721-2262

Tracking Obesity Prevention to Age 5 - Follow-up of the Greenlight Plus Intervention:
This follow-up study will evaluate the longer-term impact of the Greenlight Plus intervention which showed a significant reduction in the proportion of children who were overweight or obese at the age of two years, after receiving a primary-care based prevention program utilizing developmentally appropriate booklets, counseling, and individually tailored text messaging to parents. With the results of this research, which will include measures of children's weight trajectories, physical activity, dietary intake, screen time, and sleep patterns, we will be able to determine the sustained impact of the Greenlight Plus intervention delivered during the first two years of life on weight outcomes through the age of 5-6 years. These findings will have implications for guiding future obesity prevention practices implemented in primary care.

Outcome/Impact: Follow-up to the Greenlight Plus Intervention seeks to track 900 children through age 5-6, measuring weight trajectories, physical activity, dietary intake, screen time, and sleep patterns. Seeking to determine long-term impact of this intervention.

Scope: National

Contact: Alan Delamater at (adelamater@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-6857

Multimodal, objective assessment of the ASD phenotype - Longitudinal stability and change across contexts: The study will enroll 150 three- to five-year-old children to investigate how objective measurements of ASD-related behaviors, such as movement, speaking, and conversational turn-taking, are associated with the disorder's severity. We will study them throughout the school year to determine the stability of ASD-relevant behaviors and whether they change with time in both a relatively controlled clinical assessment and in relatively unconstrained preschool. Children's behavior will be



recorded with synchronized video and audio recorders. State-of-the-art machine learning approaches will be used to objectively characterize each child's vocalizations, identify social gaze and smiles, and quantify social contact and social approach (digital proxemics).

Scope: Miami-Dade County

Contact: Daniel Messinger at (dmessinger@miami.edu) or 305-284-8443

Nourish-T+ Promoting Health Eating and Exercise Behaviors: The purpose of this clinical research study is to teach parents/caregivers skills that will help prevent and reduce the problems of obesity in childhood cancer survivors. In this study, parents have the opportunity to participate in one of two web-based groups in which parents in either group will learn valuable information to improve the health of their child and of themselves.

Scope: Florida state-wide initiative

Contact: Jennifer Coto at (jennifercoto@med.miami.edu) or 305-243-0848

MN-Institute on Community Integration, UCEDD/LEND

Early childhood program area (UCEDD and LEND) advances early identification and prevention by combining population-based surveillance (ADDM, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy) with proactive developmental monitoring and outreach through Learn the Signs. Act Early, reducing delays that drive long-term health and education costs. Provides transparent, real-world data on child health through rigorous surveillance systems that track prevalence, outcomes, and disparities, supporting evidence-based and accountable decision-making. Supports families and strengthens public trust by offering clear, practical tools and information that help caregivers understand child development and seek help when concerns arise. Promotes a whole-child, whole-system approach by integrating health, education, and community systems and avoiding siloed or crisis-driven responses. Builds the next generation of health leaders through LEND by training interdisciplinary professionals to translate data into practice, lead systems change and sustain prevention-focused child health strategies.

Contact: Jen Hall-Lande hall0440@umn.edu

Teleoutreach Center (UCEDD and LEND) TeleOutreach Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Follow Up Clinic Family Support Modules: The University of Minnesota ICI team



developed NICU Follow Up Family modules through collaboration with them NICU Follow Up Clinic, Department of Pediatrics, and the Birth to Three Clinic. The modules include brief, family focused videos and related resources that include infant nutrition and feedings after discharge from the NICU.

Outcome/Impact: The modules are embedded into an online family portal which begins pilot testing with families in February, 2026.

Scope: Minnesota.

Contact: Jessica Simacek, sima0034@umn.edu

Project ECHO to improve provider capacity for health and educational providers who support rural and military connected families of children with behavioral health needs, including autism spectrum disorder. This online 'hub and spoke' training meets weekly with a 'hub team' of experts and community health care providers and provides training and case based learning in specialized topics. The Project ECHO has included nutrition focused information, such as nutritional supplementation for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities (e.g., fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) and promotion of medical assessment and well being for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (such as assessing for sleep needs).

Outcome/Impact: We have conducted 83 ECHO sessions with 321 unique provider trainees and administered 288 CEUs.

Scope: Nationwide.

Link to activity: <https://midb.umn.edu/news/bringing-together-providers-broaden-care-access-children-geographically-dispersed-areas>

NJ-The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Addressing Disparities in Language and Social-emotional Skill Acquisition through Literacy Promotion in Primary Care: This study tests the extent to which tailored outreach text messages that provide a cue to action and an intervention that enhances access to community resources, in combination with standard primary care literacy promotion, can improve child language and social-emotional skill acquisition among low-income Latino children.

Scope: Middlesex County, NJ

Contact: Manuel Jimenez , MD, MS (jimenema@rwjms.rutgers.edu)



Ready and Healthy for Kindergarten: A Primary Care Innovation to Promote a 360-degree View of Child Health: This application tests an innovative family wellness program that promotes academic and physical readiness for school using a rigorous mixed methods and community engaged approach.

Scope: New Jersey state-wide initiative

Contact: Manuel Jimenez , MD, MS (jimenema@rwjms.rutgers.edu)

Mentored patient-oriented research that applies a social determinants of health lens to promote optimal developmental and behavioral health in primary care: The overall objectives of this project are to provide Dr. Manuel E. Jimenez with mentorship-focused protected time to: (1) augment his research capabilities building on his funded patient-oriented research program that uses community-engaged research and implementation science to address social determinants of health (SDOH) in primary care, and (2) mentor the next generation of interprofessional clinician investigators and enhance their capabilities to apply SDOH and prevention and health promotion lenses on patient-oriented research. The research identifies and tests a core primary care-based literacy promotion model to support optimal developmental and behavioral health.

Scope: New Jersey state-wide initiative

Contact: Manuel Jimenez , MD, MS (jimenema@rwjms.rutgers.edu)

NY-Rose F. Kennedy Center, UCEDD/LEND

Screen Time, Physical Activity, Sleep, and Obesity Among Children with and Without Autism: This study uses intra-pandemic national data to examine associations between screen time and physical activity, sleep duration, and body mass index in children with and without autism. A secondary analysis of the 2020 National Survey of Children's Health examined daily recreational screen time among children aged 6–17 years and the association of more than two hours of screen time per day with meeting CDC recommendations for physical activity, sleep, and healthy BMI. Outcome/Impact: Results show that children with autism were more likely to exceed two hours of daily screen time, but screen time had fewer associations with meeting CDC lifestyle recommendations in this group compared to neurotypical children. In contrast, screen time greater than two hours per day was associated with not meeting any lifestyle recommendations among neurotypical children. These findings have implications for counseling families on realistic screen time habits.



Scope: United States (national)

Contact: Mollie Lobl, MD (mlobl@montefiore.org)

Direct Link: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08830738251392088>

Associations Between Depressive Symptoms and Health Related Social Needs in Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities: This ongoing study (May 2024–May 2025) examines the relationship between depressive symptoms and health-related social needs (HRSNs) among adolescents with developmental disabilities evaluated by a multidisciplinary developmental team (N=109). Routine depression and suicide screening (PHQ-9) and standardized HRSN screening were implemented for all new patients. Nearly one-third of families screened positive for at least one HRSN, most commonly food insecurity and housing quality concerns. Adolescents with moderate to severe depressive symptoms were significantly more likely to report unmet HRSNs, including food insecurity and transportation needs, even after adjusting for age and gender. Findings highlight the importance of integrating mental health screening with social needs assessment for adolescents with developmental disabilities.

Scope: New York (Bronx, Westchester County, Manhattan)

Contact: Maria Valicenti-McDermott, MD, MS (mvalicen@montefiore.org)

The Use of Transient-Evoked Otoacoustic Emissions in the Assessment of Hearing in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Retrospective Chart Review: This project involves a retrospective chart review of patients seen in the Audiology Department RFK CERC between November 2024 and October 2025 to examine the use of transient-evoked otoacoustic emissions (TEOAEs) in assessing hearing in children with autism spectrum disorder. The study aims to support the use of TEOAEs as a reliable assessment tool for children who cannot be tested using behavioral methods. Findings are expected to contribute to the development of hearing assessment protocols for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. The work also supports trainee education through presentation at a national conference.

Scope: New York City metropolitan area

Contact: Rebecca Greenberg, Au.D. (rebeweiss@montefiore.org)

SPARK for Autism (Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge): The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased over cent decades, and



for most individuals the specific causes remain unknown. SPARK is a national research initiative designed to recruit, engage, and retain a cohort of 50,000 individuals with ASD and their family members to advance understanding of genetic and environmental contributors to autism. Participants enroll through an online registration process and provide a saliva sample for genetic analysis, creating a large, genotyped cohort available to the autism research community. The data generated support studies examining both genetic and non-genetic factors associated with ASD and accelerating clinical research efforts. This project also provides patients at the Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center with access to genetic testing and participation in a national autism research community.

Impact/Outcome: SPARK Consortium. Integrating de novo and inherited variants in 42,607 autism cases identifies mutations in new moderate effect genes.

Resources/Direct Links: Nature Genetics, August 2022. Lee C, Green Snyder LA, Carpenter L, Harris J, Kanne S, Taylor C, Sarver D, Shulman LH, SPARK Consortium. Agreement of parent-reported level with standard measures among children with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism Research*, 2023;1–15.

doi:10.1002/aur.2934. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/aur.2934>

Sebastian M, Odgis JA, Suckiel SA, et al. The TeleKidSeq pilot study: incorporating telehealth into clinical care of children from diverse backgrounds undergoing whole genome sequencing. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies*, 2023;9(1):47.

doi:10.1186/s40814-023-01259-5. PMID: 36949526.

Verbal Stimulation Among Young Children With and Without Neurodevelopmental Disabilities: This research project examines verbal stimulation practices among children ages 12–35 months with and without neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD), focusing on early language exposure. Findings show that children with NDD are significantly less likely to experience frequent storytelling or singing compared to peers without NDD, highlighting early disparities. Caregiver education, employment, physical health, and household socioeconomic status were identified as key predictors of language-rich interactions.

Outcomes/Impact: Analysis included young children with and without NDD from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Children with NDD had significantly lower rates of storytelling or singing four or more days per week (adjusted OR 0.438; 99% CI 0.23–0.81; p=0.009). Caregiver and household factors were significant predictors of verbal stimulation practices. Submitted to *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* (JDBP).



Scope: New York state-wide initiative

Contact: Tehrima Rai, MD, MPH at (traⁱ@montefiore.org) or 718-839-7260

CTSA Engaging Individuals with Disability in the Research Process: This working group operates under the auspices of the NIH Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program and is developing practical strategies and materials to elevate the perspectives of people with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities (ASD/DD) in research. Our UCEDD's Co-Director is a member of this national working group, which meets twice monthly to advance inclusion of people with disabilities throughout the research process. The group's work addresses the critical gap in disability-focused research, as just about 5% of NIH-funded research addresses the disability community despite approximately 1-in-6 US children having an ASD/DD and 27% of US adults having a disability.

Direct Link: <https://ccos-cc.ctsa.io/groups/working-groups/engaging-individuals-with-disability-in-the-research-process>

Scope: National (CTSA consortium-wide)

Contact: Karen Bonuck, PhD (karen.bonuck@einsteinmed.edu)

Disability as Difference: Reducing Researcher Roadblocks (D2/R3): Approximately 1-in-6 US children have an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disability (ASD/DD) and 27% of US adults have a disability, yet just about 5% of NIH-funded research addresses the disability community, leaving the nation underprepared to meet their healthcare needs. The D2/R3 study aims to measure investigators' and research team members' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of including people with ASD/DD throughout the research process from conceptualization to dissemination of results. The project involves co-designing training modules on researcher-level factors that contribute to people with disabilities' under-representation in research, followed by a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the eLearning module. This project is supported by Einstein-Montefiore's CTSA program and directly addresses the critical research participation gap for people with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: Study actively recruiting researchers. RCT registered on ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT07220837). }

Scope: National recruitment (CTSA network); based at Einstein-Montefiore, Bronx, NY

Contact: Karen Bonuck, PhD (karen.bonuck@einsteinmed.edu)



Direct Link: <https://einsteinmed.edu/centers/ictr/reducing-researcher-roadblocks/>,
ClinicalTrials.gov: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT04553081>, and
doi:10.1017/cts.2025.10073

School Disengagement and Mental Health Trends Among U.S. Children: This ongoing national research initiative examines trends in school disengagement among U.S. children ages 6–17, with a focus on children with mental health conditions and developmental disabilities. Using data from the National Survey of Children’s Health through 2022 and 2023, the study evaluates temporal changes in disengagement and associated social and educational factors, including food insecurity, residential mobility, and special education needs. The analysis highlights disparities in pediatric flourishing among children with behavioral and mental health conditions. Findings are being used to inform the development of clinical screening approaches and school-based mental health supports.

Outcome/Impact: 136,576 children across five annual NSCH cohorts. **Key findings:** School disengagement increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and remained elevated through 2022, with children with mental health conditions experiencing 2–3 times higher disengagement rates than peers. 2022 school disengagement rates: Behavioral/conduct problems: 63.2%; Depression: 53.7%; ADHD: 50.7%; Anxiety: 41.3%; Children without these conditions: 12%; All U.S. children: 19.1%.

Scope: National: Findings representative of the U.S. population
Regional implementation: Bronx and New York State (planned collaboration in 2026 with Montefiore School Health Program and the New York School-Based Health Alliance)

Direct Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41087018/>

Contact: Fiorella B. Castillo, MD (ficastillo@montefiore.org)

Camouflaging and Anxiety Among Autistic Adolescents: This research examines the relationship between camouflaging behaviors and self-reported anxiety among autistic adolescents. Camouflaging, or masking autistic traits in social settings, was measured using the Camouflaging Autism Traits Questionnaire (CAT-Q) and compared with anxiety symptoms assessed by the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED). Higher camouflaging scores were associated with greater likelihood of screening positive for anxiety. The study also explored demographic and clinical factors related to camouflaging behaviors.

Outcome/Impact: CAT-Q scores were significantly correlated with anxiety symptoms on the SCARED ($r = 0.436$, $p < .001$). Adolescents with positive CAT-Q scores ($N = 30$)



were more likely to screen positive for anxiety compared to those with lower camouflaging (28% vs. 7%, $p < .001$).

Scope: Bronx, New York City, Westchester County, and surrounding regions (patients seen at CERC)

Contact: Rebecca Polchinski, DO, FAAP (rpolchinsk@montefiore.org)

Verbal Stimulation Among Young Children With and Without Neurodevelopmental Disabilities: This research project examines verbal stimulation practices among children ages 12–35 months with and without neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD), focusing on early language exposure. Findings show that children with NDD are significantly less likely to experience frequent storytelling or singing compared to peers without NDD, highlighting early disparities. Caregiver education, employment, physical health, and household socioeconomic status were identified as key predictors of language-rich interactions.

Outcome/Impact: Analysis included young children with and without NDD from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Children with NDD had significantly lower rates of storytelling or singing four or more days per week (adjusted OR 0.438; 99% CI 0.23–0.81; $p=0.009$). Caregiver and household factors were significant predictors of verbal stimulation practices.

Scope: New York state-wide initiative

Contact: Tehrima Rai, MD, MPH and (tra@montefiore.org) or 718-839-7260

Disability Doula Project: Formative Assessment for Healthcare Navigation Support: People with ASD/DD experience significant healthcare disparities, with many forgoing routine care after leaving the “pediatric comfort zone” due to fear, anxiety, and provider reluctance to serve patients with complex behavioral needs. This project conducts a formative assessment to adapt a novel “disability doula” model for Montefiore’s Department of Family and Social Medicine, using caregiver-professionals with lived disability experience to help people with ASD/DD navigate healthcare visits. The disability doula prepares families and staff before visits, provides support during exams and procedures, and educates providers. With 17% of New York schoolchildren having ASD/DD and racial/ethnic minority adults experiencing the worst disparities, this addresses a critical need in the Bronx, where nearly 60% of New York State’s population lives in Einstein-Montefiore’s catchment area. The project uses mixed-methods research with adults with IDD, families, and primary care clinicians to support future program implementation.



Outcome/Impact: Target participants: 100 adults with IDD and/or families (surveys), 10 in-depth interviews, and 50 clinicians/staff. The Rose F. Kennedy Center serves ~2,000 unique adults with IDD annually. NY's Medicaid Provider Policy Manual (August 2025) identifies health advocacy as a covered service, creating a sustainable funding model.

Scope: Bronx, New York

Direct Link: <https://cdd.ny.gov/targeted-disparity-small-grant-opportunity-bronx-and-chautauqua-counties>

Contacts: Karen Bonuck, PhD (karen.bonuck@einsteinmed.edu) and Joanne F. Siegel, LCSW (josiegel@montefiore.org)

NY-Westchester Institute for Human Development, UCEDD/LEND

Research on Autism & Developmental Health: WIHD's Research group has an article in press in Developmental Disabilities Network Journal entitled, "Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Regional Support Centers (RSC): A framework for effectively engaging stakeholders." This paper summarizes the work of the three UCEDDs in New York serving as CYSHCN Regional Support Centers.

Outcome/Impact: The RSCs aimed to increase the capacity of local CYSHCN programs to connect with and support CYSHCN, including children with autism, and their families to access and navigate services and supports. This activity supports MAHA priorities by promoting family navigation for children with autism.

Direct Link: <https://www.wihd.org/children-and-youth-with-special-health-care-needs-cyshcn/>

Expanded Research in Autism & Developmental Conditions: WIHD conducts research on early autism identification, including the article "Children with Autism and Early Diagnosis," which emphasizes timely screening to improve developmental outcomes and advocates for family access to evaluation and resources. These efforts support MAHA priorities by enabling early intervention, reducing long-term health risks, and promoting equitable, prevention-focused care. WIHD also trains LEND fellows in research and research-to-practice translation, building workforce capacity and ensuring findings reach families, schools, and clinicians.

Outcome/Impact: Each year, fellows study autism-related topics; this year's focus is on restricted, repetitive, and sensory behaviors in infants and toddlers. Together, these activities advance MAHA goals through early detection, data-driven improvement, and better access for vulnerable populations.



Direct Link: <https://www.wihd.org/research/>

Contact: Tricia A. Patrick, DrPH at 914-493-8203 or (ppatrick@wihd.org)

OH-The Nisonger Center, UCEDD/LEND

Recognizing the importance of Community Health Workers (CHWs) as the backbone of the public health workforce, The University of Cincinnati UCEDD and The Ohio State University Nisonger Center have collaborated through the Ohio Disability and Health Partnership to develop and implement a comprehensive CHW training initiative that directly addresses MAHA priorities by building workforce capacity for chronic disease prevention and person-centered healthcare delivery. Since 2022, this joint UCEDD partnership has trained 625 CHWs across urban and rural Ohio communities through 28 specialized sessions. In 2025 alone, 205 CHWs completed training through 11 disability-focused sessions totaling 24 hours of instruction. The training curriculum centers authentic experiences of people with disabilities through testimonial videos and case studies, equipping CHWs with practical skills to address chronic conditions, including diabetes management, cancer screening navigation, and mental health support, among individuals with disabilities. Strategic partnerships with The University of Cincinnati UCEDD, The Ohio State University, Ohio University, and the Pathways Community Hub Institute enable scalable delivery across diverse healthcare settings statewide.

Outcome/impact: Preventive Healthcare Access: A follow-up analysis revealed that more than 90% of adults with disabilities that received our training are now connected to preventive care, including cancer screenings, chronic disease management (diabetes, hypertension), and mental health services, addressing significant health gaps (individuals with disabilities visit emergency rooms twice as often as other Ohioans). **Measurable Workforce Attitude Change:** Our pre-and-post training analysis (n=90) indicated a fundamental shift in how CHWs perceive disability: deficit-focused language ("unable," "handicap") decreased by 92% (43.9% to 5.1%), while capability-focused language ("capable," "dignity," "peer") increased 193% (12.3% to 51.9%), indicating a positive shift toward serving this crucial, but often-overlooked population. Of the CHWs that took our training, 96% reported they will apply training content in practice. This Ohio-based partnership directly advances three core MAHA priorities: (1) Chronic Disease Prevention: equipping 610 healthcare workers to proactively manage diabetes, hypertension, and cancer screening among a high-risk population; (2) Measurable Health Outcomes: demonstrating 90% connection to preventive care rather than measuring healthcare visits; (3) Scalable Workforce Development: a brief, replicable training model with documented outcomes that cost-effectively reduces healthcare differences for a population experiencing disproportionate chronic disease burden.



Scope: Urban and rural Ohio. Expandable model successfully piloted at the national level.

Contact: David Ellsworth at (david.ellsworth@osucme.edu) or 614-685-5614

OH-University of Cincinnati UCE, UCEDD/LEND

A Short-Term Evaluation of the Eat and Exercise to Win Program for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities," published in *Nutrients* (2024), assesses a health promotion intervention delivered at adult day care centers to improve dietary habits, physical activity, and health knowledge among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), a population at high risk for obesity, poor nutrition, and inactivity due to barriers in accessing tailored programs. Researchers, led by Laura Nabors from the University of Cincinnati, conducted a preliminary evaluation showing promising short-term gains in healthy eating behaviors (e.g., fruit/vegetable intake), exercise participation, and positive attitudes toward wellness, with no conflicts of interest declared. This directly aligns with the Make America Health Again initiative by emphasizing practical, inclusive strategies to combat chronic disease drivers like unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles—core pillars of the movement—through evidence-based nutrition education and physical activity promotion, extending benefits to underserved groups to enhance overall national health equity and resilience.

Outcome/Impact: While participants' weights did not significantly differ at 3 months, assessing photographs indicated that participants' lunches included more fruits and vegetables. Staff surveys indicated that participants had greater knowledge of MyPlate and were consuming more water at three months. Survey responses indicated that staff perceived the program to be valuable overall, and challenges in learning and assessment were reported given differences in the cognitive abilities of adults with IDD. Staff also suggested engaging home caregivers in the program, as they often make dietary decisions... Overall, results confirmed that the EE-2-Win Program positively impacted healthy eating and exercise. (*Nutrients*, 16 (18), 3124, p.1).

Scope: Ohio – two specific adult day care centers for adults with IDD

Contact: Kara Ayers (kara.ayers@cchmc.org)

Direct Link: Nabors, L., Bauer, A., Ayers, K., Workman, B., Butsch Kovacic, M., & Lee, S. Y. (2024). A Short Term Evaluation of the Eat and Exercise to Win Program for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *Nutrients*, 16(18), 3124.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39339724/>



OR-Center for Excellence in Disabilities, UCEDD

Improving early communication outcomes for young children with complex communication needs and their families through hybrid in-person and telehealth models. Across multiple studies, researchers examined Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and early language interventions for preschoolers, children with Down syndrome, and families in rural Oregon, with the goal of increasing caregiver strategy use and child communication during everyday routines. Findings were disseminated at national and state conferences and submitted for publication to increase replication opportunities in other states.

Outcome/Impact: These efforts help advance timely, accessible communication supports for families statewide, including those living in rural communities. In 2026, the program will build on this momentum to scale and share tools that make communication learning easier for families and practitioners across Oregon.

Direct Link: <https://www.ohsu.edu/university-center-excellence-development-disability/communication-and-aac-research>

Contact: Emily Quinn, PhD (quinnem@ohsu.edu)

TX-Center on Disability and Development, UCEDD

Review of Healthcare Initiatives among Centers within the AUCD network: Individuals with disabilities indicate key barriers they face in accessing health care are communication failure between professionals and patient/caregiver, financial limitations, attitudinal/behavioral issues, scarce service provision, organizational barriers, and transportation challenges (Clemente et al., 2022). Healthcare service providers, in turn, reported that a key barrier to providing health care to individuals with disabilities is lack of training (Clemente et al., 2022). In response to these disparities, institutions within the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) network have developed various resources to improve health professionals' awareness and competency in disability care. We reviewed and synthesized the resources currently available within the network to identify major trends and training emphasis for health professionals working with people with disabilities.

Outcome/Impact: Findings of this review were presented at the 149th Annual Meeting of American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), a nationwide forum for researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and advocates in the field of IDD. The themes and topics identified from this review will inform future trainings and materials for healthcare professionals and help researchers identify evidence-based strategies for improving healthcare services for people with disabilities.



Contact: Xinyuan Yang (yangxy@tamu.edu)

TX-Texas Center for Disability Studies, UCEDD/LEND

PODER Familiar (Family Power) is a NIDILRR (ACL) funded project that developed a health promotion intervention for families of children with IDD. The intervention included a 10-week curriculum that focused on smart goals related to stress reduction, nutrition, exercise and well-being. The curriculum was delivered by parent peer-mentors

Outcome/Impact: 90 people participated in the pilot study and randomized control trial. Positive outcomes included improved caregiver health related self-efficacy, reduction of stress, improved global health outcomes, exercise and nutrition for the children.

Scope: The study was conducted Texas and Illinois state-wide initiatives

Contact: Sandy Magaña (smagana@austin.utexas.edu)

Direct Link: <https://disabilitystudies.utexas.edu/poder>

The EMPOWER Study is a research study focused on understanding the state of healthcare transition readiness among youth (12-26 years) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including autism, and their caregivers. This research study is collecting quantitative data on several measures, including health care access and use, health care transition readiness, self-determination, and health-related quality of life. A qualitative study will also examine the lived experiences of youth with IDD and their caregivers in preparing for and navigating health care transition to identify effective support strategies for both youth and caregivers. Through this research study, the team has presented several workshops to caregivers and professionals on health care transition for youth with IDD.

Outcomes/Impact: To date, we have enrolled 37 youth and 37 caregivers in the study, with the goal of recruiting a total sample of 200 youth and 200 caregivers. The EMPOWER team has also provided resources related to healthcare transition to over 1000 parents and professionals.

Scope: Nationwide

Contact: Sandra Vanegas, PhD (Sandra.vanegas@austin.utexas.edu)

Direct Link: <https://sites.utexas.edu/empowerstudy/>



The IDEAL research study is focused on identifying the early indicators of autism among Latino children. By studying the longitudinal development of Latino children, the team aims to identify when and how autism can be identified among Latino children, with the goal of improving early autism diagnosis. This study is recruiting Latino children (with and without developmental delays) between 1 and 3 years of age and their primary caregiver to complete a comprehensive battery of autism and language/communication assessments every 6 months for 2 years.

Outcomes/Impact: To date, we have enrolled 9 children in the study, with the goal of recruiting a total sample of 132 children.

Scope: Texas state-wide initiative

Contact: Sandra Vanegas, PhD; Sandra.vanegas@austin.utexas.edu

Direct Link: <https://disabilitystudies.utexas.edu/ideal>

The MILES study focuses on understanding the longitudinal associations between language/communication and motor skills/physical activity in infants with and without Down syndrome. The goal is to identify how early language and motor skills influence later development across domains to inform early intervention strategies for infants with Down syndrome. This study follows infants between 6 and 30 months of age and follows them for 1 year, with comprehensive language/communication, motor, and physical activity measures completed every 6 months.

Outcomes/Impact: To date, we have enrolled 20 children in the study, with the goal of recruiting a total sample of 72 children. The MILES team has also provided resources to over 700 families of young children.

Scope: Texas state-wide initiative

Direct Link: <https://sites.utexas.edu/milesstudy/>

Contact: Sandra Vanegas, PhD (Sandra.vanegas@austin.utexas.edu)

VA-Partnership for People with Disabilities, UCEDD/LEND

VA UCEDD - The Costs and Outcomes Project provides a data-driven foundation for improving the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by linking ten years of Medicaid claims, support needs assessments, and quality-of-life data for those using Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). This research serves as a tool for transparency and accountability, examining how Medicaid and medical services impact physical, behavioral, and personal outcomes, including



choice and community participation, while controlling for individual characteristics. Outcome/Impact: With 17 peer-reviewed publications, the project provides evidence-based accountability to ensure HCBS investments are optimized to drive health and well-being for people with IDD.

Contact: Parthy Dinora (padinora@vcu.edu)

WA-University of Washington Institute on Human Development and Disability, UCEDD/LEND

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Diagnostic & Prevention Network (FASDPN) core clinic maintains a comprehensive database on patients evaluated for prenatal alcohol exposure. It coordinates a network of community-based diagnostic sites and provides interdisciplinary evaluations using the 4-Digit Diagnostic Code. Research focuses on tracking diagnostic outcomes and developing screening tools for environmental alcohol exposure.

Outcome/Impact: Database contains 3,520 patient records; 68 diagnostic evaluations completed in FY25; over 100 studies published.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Susan (Astley) Hemingway, PhD (astley@uw.edu)

The Development Follow-Up Clinic provides interdisciplinary assessment for infants with a history of prematurity, low birth weight, or substance exposure in utero. Teams from neonatology and developmental pediatrics conduct longitudinal monitoring to identify early intervention needs.

Outcome/Impact: Provided 1,437 encounters for ~497 high-risk children (88% under age 3) in the reporting year.

Scope: Regional (Seattle-based)

Contact: Emily Myers, MD (emily.myers@seattlechildrens.org)

IMPACT Collaboratory (Heather Feldner): This lab researches the intersection of mobility, disability, and technology, including the design of pediatric mobility technology. It explores how the built environment affects participation and equity for children with disabilities. The lab fosters community partnerships to empower individuals as co-researchers.



Outcome/Impact: Recently funded by UW Kren Engineering in Medicine Initiative to develop open-source assistive technology solutions.

Contact: Heather Feldner, MPT, PhD (impactco@uw.edu)

Incarceration Research Project: A commission report mapping how people with IDD become entangled in the justice system. It utilized a mixed-methods approach including scoping reviews and interviews to identify root causes like lack of police training. The report recommends mandatory training and expanded diversion programs.

Outcome/Impact: Report released July 15, 2025; identified key barriers in police and court proceedings.

Scope: Washington state-wide initiative

Contact: Mark Harniss, PhD (mharniss@uw.edu)

WY-Wyoming Institute for Disabilities, UCEDD

Research on Autism and Developmental Health—Several studies have been conducted to examine the degree to which frontline screeners and diagnostic tools for autism function similarly across all demographic groups.

Outcome/Impact: Results suggest that there are a large number of items across instruments that do not function similarly; however, the overall effect on the instrument performance does not seem to substantially alter the outcomes of the instruments. However, simulation studies suggest that the tools may lead to spurious results in some situations. Future research is exploring how to remediate these challenges.

Contact: Michelle Jarman (mjarman@uwyo.edu)