



Prevention Research Center  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Annual Report

YEAR TWO

**September 2020 –  
August 2021**



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# Letter from the Director

The **University of Wisconsin–Madison Prevention Research Center** had a very successful and eventful second year. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we are so delighted that our Community Advisory Board is now fully constituted, with the addition of our “Family Circle,” composed of nine community members with lived experiences relevant to the Center’s mission. We are looking forward to listening to and incorporating their voices as we continue to shape the Center’s research and translational agenda and build on our successes.

The pandemic and surrounding events have dramatically influenced the work we do and how we do that work. One unexpected positive outcome from the pandemic was being able to host four distinguished scholars as virtual speakers on timely topics like substance use during pregnancy and community engagement in research. Additionally, the Center and Community Advisory Board members rose to the occasion, playing key roles in projects designed to help our community and public health partners address the challenges of COVID. Their work produced a toolkit to support community-based approaches to public health emergencies like the pandemic and an ongoing campaign to boost confidence and promote acceptance of vaccination against COVID among rural Wisconsin families. Each of these products and more are described in detail on the following pages.

On the research front, the Center’s Core Research Project, **Addressing Postpartum Depression in Wisconsin Home Visiting Programs**, remains critically important in light of the stresses placed on new mothers and our mental health system during the pandemic. In partnership with community organizations, Drs. Clark and Mahoney successfully piloted the project in a virtual format during the pandemic. In addition, the UWPRC’s Small Grant’s Program, once again, awarded funding to outstanding early-stage investigators doing truly exciting and important research, as detailed within our report.

Late in the year, UWPRC’s founding Director, Dr. Deborah Ehrenthal, transitioned to a new leadership role at Pennsylvania State University. I feel fortunate to have been selected as the next UWPRC Director and am grateful to Dr. Ehrenthal for her vision and leadership. I am excited to work together with PRC staff, campus affiliates and leaders, the CDC, and the members of the UWPRC’s Family Circle, Organizational Partners, and Translational Partners Panel to carry out the Center’s mission and, most importantly, to contribute to sustainable, positive impacts on health and health equity for women, infants, and families.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy 2022.

**Elizabeth Cox, MD, PhD**



**Prevention Research Center**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

# About our Center

## Mission

Our mission is to improve the health of low-income women, infants, and families by conducting high quality, applied, health promotion and disease prevention research with a focus on achieving health equity.

## Vision

Our vision is a center that engages UW–Madison researchers, community members, and translational partners to expand prevention research and its translation to improve the health of low-income women, infants, and children.

We support community engagement, research, and training to expand applied prevention research in three thematic research areas:

### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

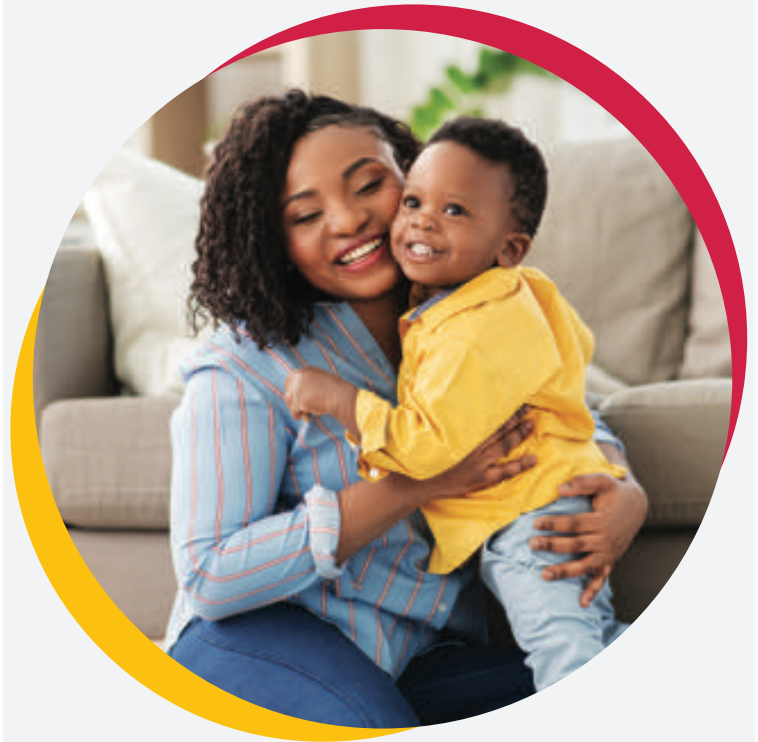
engaging mothers, fathers, and families to support child health and development

### QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

to reduce maternal morbidity and infant mortality

### ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS

to improve maternal and child health among low-income women and families



## The big picture

Prevention Research Centers, or PRCs, are a network of 26 academic research centers in the United States that study how people and their communities can avoid or counter the risks for chronic illnesses. PRCs identify public health problems, and develop, test, and evaluate public health interventions that can be applied widely, particularly in underserved communities.

**The University of Wisconsin–Madison PRC is the only CDC-funded center focused on maternal and child health.**

Our center developed a five-year Applied Prevention Research and Translation Agenda to guide research priorities and activities. The agenda will focus on:

- Health of low-income women, infants, and children
- Building on UW–Madison's research expertise and activities and its long-standing collaborations with state and local public health departments, state government and service agencies, and communities
- Health disparities and inequities
- Prioritizing prevention research that has potential regional and statewide reach



# Community and Academic Partners

## Meet our Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Our central tenet is to meaningfully engage with communities in identifying research questions, conducting research, interpreting results, and disseminating findings.

Our Community Advisory Board, or CAB, is structured to have equal representation from community members with lived experience (Family Circle) as well as individuals representing organizations (Organizational Partners) that provide advocacy and services related to the center's mission.

Recruitment of Family Circle members began in earnest in February 2021. Since then, nine members from different communities across the state joined our CAB and have attended one of several virtual orientation sessions between May and September 2021.

## MEMBERS OF OUR CAB



## CAB members provide valuable input on research to improve health and health equity

Several Organizational Partners (OPs) were directly involved in the “Building a Public Health Reserve with Community Health Workers (CHW) project,” to design and pilot test a culturally appropriate strategy to support the rapid scale-up of COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and vaccination. This work resulted in the creation of a toolkit that can be used by others seeking to engage CHWs in a similar way, in other environments and situations.

One of our OPs, Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program, or SWCAP, a rural, nonprofit, anti-poverty agency serving the Wisconsin counties of Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland has been a critical partner in the work of our Communities Confronting COVID-19 project, working to build trust and confidence in COVID-19 vaccines among Wisconsin’s rural families with children.

Several OPs joined members of the UWPRC Translational Partners Panel in providing vital input into the Wisconsin Maternal Mortality Review process and the resulting report.

**>> [Read more about these projects on page 8.](#)**

## CAB guides selection of Small Grant awardees

This year, both Organizational Partners and newly recruited Family Circle members of the CAB acted as reviewers for the UWPRC Small Grants program. They focused on evaluating whether the problem being researched was important to women, children, and families across Wisconsin, and on the potential impact of each proposal on members of their own as well as other communities. Their feedback led to the selection of two high quality Small Grant projects:



PROJECT TITLE:

**Centering community voices of parents and caregivers of children 0-11 years old in Wisconsin through community-led conversations to support health, wellness, and well-being for children and families**

Janean Dilworth-Bart, School of Human Ecology



PROJECT TITLE:

**A community-based pilot feasibility study to adapt the CHIME+ program to build resilience among minoritized families**

Tuyen Huynh, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

**>> [Read more about Small Grants on our website.](#)**

## Community and Academic Partners

CONTINUED

### Invited faculty speakers boost skills and knowledge around Maternal and Child Health, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The UWPRC hosted four faculty members this year – two from UW-Madison and two from other institutions. All faculty members gave a lecture at the Department of Population Health Sciences Monday Seminar. External faculty also met with staff and faculty members affiliated with the UWPRC as well as graduate students interested in their work.



LECTURE TITLE:

**“Development and Validation of the Research Engagement Survey Tool (REST)”**

SPEAKER:

**Melody Goodman, PhD**, associate dean for Research and associate professor of Biostatistics, New York University School of Global Public Health



LECTURE TITLE:

**“Household Income and the Developing Brain: The Baby’s First Years Study”**

SPEAKER:

**Katherine Magnuson, PhD**, professor at the UW-Madison Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work and director of the Institute for Research on Poverty

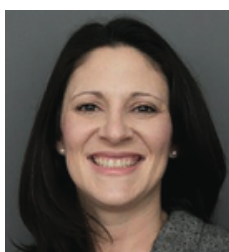


LECTURE TITLE:

**“Re-born: How COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement changed my scholarly life”**

SPEAKER:

**Whitney Robinson, PhD**, associate professor of Epidemiology, University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health



LECTURE TITLE:

**“Punitive Prenatal Substance Use Policies and Prenatal Care”**

SPEAKER:

**Christine Durrance, PhD**, associate professor of Public Affairs, UW-Madison Robert La Follette School of Public Affairs

**>> Watch recordings of these talks.**



# Research

## Core Research Project works to enhance the impact of postpartum depression intervention in home visiting programs



A central component of the UWPRC is the Core Research Project, “Addressing Postpartum Depression in Wisconsin Home Visiting Programs,” led by Drs. Roseanne Clark and Jane Mahoney with funding from the CDC center grant. The project is testing a two-generational, parent-infant relationship focused, community-based approach to reduce the risks associated with depression in mothers.

The research team is working with the Center’s CAB and TPP to refine the Mother-Infant Therapy Group, an intervention that improves maternal depression symptoms and supports mother-infant interactions, for implementation in home visiting programs in urban, rural, and Tribal communities across Wisconsin. Refinements included paring the intervention to focus on core program elements, making cultural adaptations based on feedback from users and mental health experts from diverse cultural backgrounds; pilot program delivery; and in-depth interviews with participants to identify key program elements.

## CDC funds UWPRC to promote COVID-19 vaccine confidence



The UWPRC was awarded funding from the CDC to join the National COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Network. The network aims to build trust and promote vaccine confidence among Wisconsin’s rural families and children. Led by Dr. Susan Passmore from the UW Collaborative Center for Health Equity, the team of researchers uplifts the voices of community leaders and members, like local nurses and pastors, who support the vaccines and connects communities with various resources to facilitate vaccine uptake. One of our Organizational Partners, SWCAP, has been our guide in the work of vaccine confidence outreach and identification of our community champions. [>>Learn more about this work](#) and follow along on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

## UWPRC and partners create toolkit for public health emergencies

In response to the urgent need for high-quality information to prevent disease spread during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UWPRC worked with partners to design a community-based approach to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We worked with community health workers to develop a toolkit that can be adapted for other environments and situations.

**“This was a great opportunity to be part of the change needed to educate the community with evidence-based practices to keep families safe during COVID.”**

**—AABN Participant**

The toolkit provides guidance and suggestions for using and adapting the module and associated training, establishing an action learning community, and creating a resource library with a corresponding menu of topics. It can be used by anyone interested in bringing culturally appropriate and timely information about critical public health issues to families in their communities. Our intent was to promote open collaboration between community partners and public health for a whole community response to a health emergency. During the process, we learned that the structure of support and guidance was critical to a rapid uptake for these community-based programs.

[>>Learn more about this project.](#)



## Enhancing feasibility and actionability of Wisconsin Maternal Mortality Review Team recommendations

The UWPRC partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to create a report that describes selected deaths during and after pregnancy due to overdose that were reviewed by the Wisconsin Maternal Mortality Review Team (MMRT). The goal of this project was to provide feedback on the feasibility and actionability of recommendations identified by the MMRT before they are disseminated to practitioners across the state. We used a rapid qualitative analysis approach to analyze the critical factors and recommendations identified by the MMRT from 13 maternal overdose cases. Several CAB and TPP members provided valuable community input on the Wisconsin Maternal Mortality Review Team's current recommendations. The members brought their expertise in community services and advocacy from a variety of organizations and geographic locations that could be utilized when implementing the recommendations. A core group of MMRT members also provided feedback on the themes identified by community partners. Themes including care coordination, trust, and access to care among others were identified by both parties. >>[Read the full report.](#)

## Last year's Small Grants projects continue to make progress

In 2020, the UWPRC awarded four small grants to campus researchers focused on prevention research. While the pandemic slowed down some of the research projects, they have made significant progress.

PROJECT TITLE:

**"Assessing the Feasibility of Utilizing a Game-based Participatory Approach to Co-create Personalized Family Opioid Medication Safety Plans" (Dr. Olufunmilola Abraham)**

Moving to a virtual setting allowed Dr. Abraham's team to recruit Youth Advisory Board members from across the country. It also allowed her team to pilot MEDSMARxT Families, a game-based intervention for opioid safety, with youth and their families nationwide. A total of 72 parent-child dyads and 20 pharmacists completed the intervention at home, with preliminary results demonstrating that MEDSMARxT Families was effective at improving child and parent opioid safety knowledge. Pharmacists shared their willingness to use the intervention as a low-burden and novel method for educating families about opioid safety. Dr. Abraham's team began piloting the intervention at UW Health's Emergency Department. The project will now apply for federal funding to implement the program into clinical settings. >>[Read more.](#)

PROJECT TITLE:

**"Pilot Testing an Evidence-based, Family-Centered Intervention for Opioid Exposed Newborns in Wisconsin's Rural and Community Hospitals" (Dr. Ann Allen)**

In collaboration with the Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care and Wisconsin Perinatal Quality Collaborative, Dr. Allen and her team have identified community and rural hospitals who are interested in using the project's resources. The hospitals have been collecting baseline data before implementing the program so that they can evaluate its impact. >>[Read more.](#)

PROJECT TITLE:

**"The Effects of State Pregnancy Accommodation Laws on Maternal and Infant Health" (Drs. Jessica Pac and Alejandra Ros Pilarz)**

Drs. Pac and Pilarz have analyzed initial data and presented preliminary results at conferences last year. If their findings match their hypotheses after additional data collection, they will advocate for pregnancy accommodation laws not only in states but at the federal level. >>[Read more.](#)

PROJECT TITLE:

**"Understanding structural barriers to contraceptive autonomy among low-income Black African women in the Global South" (Dr. Leigh Senderowicz)**

Dr. Senderowicz and her team of four students have been working on coding the French focus group interviews directly in the language. Once the project data is synthesized and analyzed, it will be ready to publish into research papers and policy briefs. >>[Read more.](#)

# Funding

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Prevention Research Center is a member of the Prevention Research Centers Program. It is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cooperative agreement number 1U48DP006383. Additional funding is provided by the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, the UW–Madison Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education, and the UW–Madison Institute for Clinical and Translational Research, as well as the UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health's Department of Pediatrics and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

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