

Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities/ Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute

2019 Community-Engaged Research Seed Grants Community-Academic Research Collaboration to Improve Health Equity

The [Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities](#) (ARCC) at Northwestern University's [Center for Community Health](#) announces the recipients of seed grant funds that support Chicagoland community-engaged partnerships and research projects. ARCC believes that using the tools of science to achieve health equity can best be done when academic researchers and communities work together. The goal of these awards is to support the development and increase the number of community-academic partnerships that are prepared to collaborate to design and conduct community-engaged research projects to improve health equity. This is the twelfth round of seed grant funding and had the most applications since the program began in 2008. Each award (ranging from \$5,000-\$25,000) supports a partnership that includes a community lead from a local community organization and an academic lead from Northwestern University for a project lasting 12-24 months. Priority was given to applications that address priority health needs identified by the most recent Northwestern Memorial Hospital ([NMH](#)) [Community Health Needs Assessment](#) and focus on addressing health inequities in Chicagoland communities identified by [Healthy Chicago 2.0](#).

Partnership Development grants support newly developing partnerships in relationship building, creation of partnership structure, exploration of shared areas of interest, and research capacity development. *Research Pilot grants* advance the work of existing partnerships to conduct preliminary research activities (including some form of data collection and analysis) and develop and prepare engaged research proposals for external research funding.

Over 12 seed grant rounds, ARCC has distributed almost \$1 million to over 60 community-academic partnerships. The funded partnerships have led to increased community and academic capacity for engagement and research, new health improvements and policy changes, more than \$15 million in subsequent grant funding, and over 30 peer-reviewed publications. Grants are supported by funds from Northwestern Memorial Hospital ([NMH](#))* and the Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences ([NUCATS](#)) Institute.

ARCC 2019 Seed Grant Project Summaries **Partnership Development Grants**

Creating a Community-Based Participatory Research Partnership to Improve Disparities for African Americans and Kidney Disease

Melvin Thompson, The Endealeo Institute, and Dinee Simpson, Surgery, Feinberg School of Medicine

Disparities exist across the healthcare landscape. For African Americans, disparities in kidney disease and kidney transplant have been described in the medical literature since the 1980's. We know from this literature and from observations in clinical settings that African Americans are less likely to accept a diagnosis of kidney disease, to be referred to a

*Note: Funding from NMH is provided by the Bertha Helms Trust Foundation.

nephrologist, to be referred for evaluation for transplant, and to be approved for transplant. Despite a wealth of literature describing these disparities, very few interventions to address these disparities have been described. Of the interventions described, there has been a heavy focus on living donation. While living donation education is a very important intervention to have, it is our opinion that a multi-pronged approach with interventions that hit multiple targets will be the most effective and have the most durability when it comes to making changes for an entire community. As such, we are looking to create a community partnership between Northwestern University, Endeleo Institute, and other relevant stakeholders identified through this grant to work together to better understand the needs of specific to our community in the South Side of Chicago, with the goal to design and implement a targeted, effective, intervention.

Creating a Partnership between the Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center Healing Garden and Northwestern University Academic Researchers

Daniel Hostetler, Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center, and Teresa Horton, Anthropology, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences

Above and Beyond (AnB) is a non-profit outpatient treatment facility on the west side of Chicago. Staff and stakeholder clients of AnB seek to partner with researchers from Northwestern University to establish a community engaged research partnership that has the potential to advance the science and use of therapeutic gardening in addiction recovery. Drs. Teresa Horton (Anthropology) and David Victorson (Medical Social Sciences) investigate the health benefits of nature; they wish to examine the therapeutic role of gardening in addiction recovery. When a person is trying to overcome addiction, the mind and body crave the substance that was triggering the reward centers of the brain and creating the high. Long-term addiction recovery requires discovering new modalities that are healthy alternatives to substance use, opportunities provided by therapeutic gardening. Our ultimate goal is improving behavior through gardening. The aim of this project is to build a partnership based on the principles of community-engaged research including trust, bi-directional decision making, and cross-learning that will ultimately enable us to conduct research together that connects individuals in recovery with nature, the environment around them, and a sense of peace and purpose as they set out on a path to long-term recovery.

Evaluating the Health Benefits to Older Adults of Community-Based Housing Support Services

Gail Schechter, Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly, and Rachel O'Conor, General Internal Medicine & Geriatrics, Feinberg School of Medicine

Housing is an important social determinant of health, yet there is a lack of research formally evaluating the effect of housing support services on the health of older adults. Furthermore, there are few social service agencies in Chicago that offer these vital services for elderly residents. Since 1982, H.O.M.E. (Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly) has provided innovative affordable intergenerational housing and community-based housing support services, consisting of home repair, a shopping bus, moving assistance, and caring volunteers, to older adults living on low incomes in Chicago. Beyond anecdotal evidence, H.O.M.E. cannot prove a direct link between its unique housing services and the improved health of the people they serve. This partnership development grant seeks to establish research infrastructure and priorities to ultimately evaluate the role of housing support services on the overall health of low-income older adults in Chicago. Through a series of meetings we will convene a team of stakeholders to: 1) develop infrastructure to formalize relationships necessary to promote a sustained partnership, 2) identify shared research

goals and priorities, and 3) plan for future research collaborations that evaluate the role of housing support services on the overall health of low-income older adults in Chicago.

Launching an Advisory Council to Combat Stigma and Improve Access to Mental Health Care for Immigrant Youth and Seniors

Taneka Jennings, HANA Center, and Darby Morhardt, Mesulam Center for Cognitive Neurology & Alzheimer's Disease, Feinberg School of Medicine

Korean Americans, Asian Americans, and multi-ethnic immigrant communities face significant barriers to accessing traditional mental health care, including language and cultural stigma. These barriers result in underreporting and a lack of culturally relevant mental health resources. The ARCC research partnership development award will support the formation of a Mental Health Advisory Committee that will guide development and implementation of mental health first aid training and related behavioral health interventions for Chicagoland Korean American and multi-ethnic immigrant youth, families, and seniors. This partnership will provide the foundation for research that demonstrates the positive impact of culturally-rooted, trauma-informed, and evidence-based mental health interventions focused on reducing stigma, developing peer leadership, and enhancing access to critical mental health care among underserved immigrant communities.

(Re)Building the Foundation of Black Girlhood: A Partnership to Promote Black Girls' Socio-Emotional and Cultural Development

Gloria Dotson-Lewis, Distinctively Me, and Leoandra Onnie Rogers, Psychology, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences

In 2017, the Children and Family Justice Center reported an 81% increase in the number of adolescent girls admitted to Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice facilities, a startling upsurge that disproportionately (57%) affects Black girls. This school-to-prison pipeline, known as "pushout", is only one of several penalties Black girls in Chicago's public schools endure as a result of discriminatory school discipline practices, limited access to social workers and counselors, and overall inadequate support systems. Given systemic practices that marginalize, victimize and criminalize Black girls, it is essential to design and provide social-emotional programming that nurtures their identity development, emotional regulation, and psychosocial wellbeing. In order to thrive, youth must have access to supports that adequately offset the risks they face. The reality is that for Black girls in Chicago, the risk-to-support ratio is grossly out of balance. We propose a partnership, between Gloria Dotson-Lewis, MSW, LSW, and founder of Distinctively Me, and Leoandra Onnie Rogers, PhD, professor and developmental psychologist at Northwestern University, to correct this imbalance and disrupt the inequalities it perpetuates. Our partnership aims to (re)build the foundation of Black girlhood by providing the developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant socio-emotional support Black girls need to thrive.

Research Pilot Grants

Exploring and Addressing the Role of the Transportation Environment in Health and Resilience

Esteban Rodriguez, Northwest Side Housing Center, and Adam Becker, Pediatrics, School of Medicine/Lurie Children's Hospital

This community-engaged study explores and addresses the role that the transportation environment plays in health and resilience in Belmont Cragin, Chicago, with a focus on

walking, biking, and public transportation use. The partnership between Northwest Side Housing Center (NWSHC) and Northwestern University faculty engages NWSHC's Belmont Cragin Youth Leadership Council to assess the transportation environment in the neighborhood, share findings with community leaders and residents, and implement an action plan to advocate for change. In collaboration with the Resilient Belmont Cragin Community Collaborative (RBCCC), the project draws a connection between transportation, physical activity (one of the four pillars of RBCCC's work), health and resilience. Data gathered will include a comprehensive neighborhood walkability assessment focused on destinations of particular interest to youth, visual images collected through a community PhotoVoice project, and pilot data for psychometric testing of portions a community survey to measure risk and protective factors for health and resilience. Secondary data on health and resilience will be shared with participating youth and adult residents to inform a localized conceptual model of the relationship between transportation, the environment, and health. This model will serve as the foundation for a community-based participatory research project in the near future.

Developing Best Practices to Identify Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Foster Care through Community-Research Partnership

Juliana Harms, Illinois Department of Children & Family Services, and Kirsten Simonton, Pediatrics, Feinberg School of Medicine/Lurie Children's Hospital

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+) youth are overrepresented in foster care systems as compared to the general population, and are more likely to experience discrimination, placement instability, and leaving foster care without a permanent family than non-LGBTQ+ peers. Child welfare best practice guidelines recommend assessment of gender and sexual identity among youth so that safety protections and supports can be provided, including placement in affirming housing. However, there is no systematic practice within Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IL DCFS) to identify LGBTQ+ youth, and they remain largely under-detected. IL DCFS and Lurie Children's Hospital have partnered in this project to determine best practice strategies to identify LGBTQ+ youth in IL DCFS foster care. Through this partnership, preliminary data has been gathered from LGBTQ+ youth with IL DCFS involvement through structured interviews. We aim to explore novel recruitment strategies to continue connecting with this marginalized population as well as gather perceptions of IL DCFS stakeholders. Involving youth and IL DCFS staff in the development of an identification strategy optimizes the likelihood that LGBTQ+ youth will be safely and accurately identified, which is critical for appropriate service provision, and increases the probability of permanent family placements.

Breast Cancer Survivors and Their Caregivers: Evaluating Health Literacy and Health-Related Quality of Life in Underserved Community Members

Judy Guitelman, ALAS-Wings, and Elizabeth Hahn, Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

A community-academic research partnership between ALAS-WINGS and Northwestern University resulted in the development of an innovative project focused on health literacy and self-reported health outcomes in Spanish-speaking Latina breast cancer survivors and their caregivers. Latinas with breast cancer report significantly worse cancer-related symptom burden and health-related quality of life than non-Hispanic whites during treatment and survivorship. Informal/family caregivers are a critical source of care for cancer patients in the United States. More than half of unpaid family or informal caregivers are performing medical/nursing tasks without training, and these caregivers report high levels of physical

strain and emotional stress. In fact, Latinos provide more care and report worse personal health than non-Latino white family caregivers. Caregivers and their tasks, psychosocial needs, and health outcomes are not well understood. People with low health literacy may be less involved in their own disease management and are less likely to ask questions of their providers. Inadequate health literacy also may contribute to caregivers feeling overwhelmed by the demands of assisting the person with cancer with health management tasks. Results from this study will lead to development of an intervention to improve health outcomes and family-centered self-management for breast cancer survivors and their caregivers.

I Am Enough: An Empowerment Group for Survivors

Lisa D. Daniels, The Darren B. Easterling Center for Restorative Practices, and Tracy Fehrenbach, Psychiatry, Feinberg School of Medicine

The I Am Enough Project is dedicated to serving Women of Color who have experienced the loss of a loved one to gun violence or incarceration. We will concentrate our efforts in the communities of Englewood, Back of the Yards, Gage Park and Auburn Gresham. The overarching objective of I Am Enough is to collaboratively develop and evaluate a trauma-informed and culturally-responsive manualized treatment intervention model that results in healing and empowerment at the individual and community level. This project has the potential to significantly contribute to what is understood nationally about effective interventions for community violence, as this may be the first to have a specific focus on adult Women of Color.

Implementing organizational changes to provide gender-responsive, trauma-informed sport-based youth development programming for girls.

Elizabeth Tumiel, Girls in the Game, and Linda Lesondak, Psychiatry, Feinberg School of Medicine

Girls in Chicago communities face an extremely high level of trauma. Seventy percent of all girls experience some form of trauma during their childhood. They experience the negative impacts of trauma at higher rates than boys. This exposure to trauma and violence can negatively impact health outcomes. This can cause behaviors that lead to long-term health problems. Providing access to sports for girls who have had exposure to trauma can be an important protective factor, when implementing a trauma informed approach. In order for an organization to truly succeed in implanting a trauma-informed approach to sport, it is important the organization implement trauma-informed practices into their internal culture and program design. This research evaluation will examine the integration of a trauma informed organizational practices into Girls in the Game, a girl only, sport-based youth development organization. Girls in the Game and The Community Health and Empowerment Lab at Northwestern, in collaboration with the capacity-building organization We Coach, will utilize a Trauma-Informed Organizational Self-Assessment to measure the transformation of the organization into being trauma informed. The team will administer a pre assessment to all coaches and staff, will develop staff training practices, interventions and tools based on the results and implement a post assessment at two time points to determine the change in the perceptions of the organization's trauma informed practices. This project will result in usable interventions and tools for other sport-based youth development organizations who are interested in becoming trauma informed.

[ARCC](#) is a program of the [Center for Community Health](#), serving the Northwestern University Institute for Public Health and Medicine ([IPHAM](#)) and the Northwestern University's Clinical and

Translational Sciences ([NUCATS](#)) Institute. ARCC's mission is to grow equitable research partnerships between Chicago area communities and Northwestern University to improve health and health equity. ARCC's goals and objectives are jointly defined by a [steering committee](#) comprised of community and faith-based organizations, public agencies, and Northwestern University faculty.

Community-engaged research is an approach to conducting research in a collaborative way involving partnerships between communities and academics in an exchange of expertise between academics, as scientific experts, and communities, as local and cultural experts.

For more information, www.ARCCOnline.net or ARCC@northwestern.edu

ARCC Steering Committee members: Access Living, Apostolic Faith Church, The Blue Hat Foundation, CALOR, Cambodian Association of Illinois, Chicago Youth Programs, CJE SeniorLife, EndeLeo Institute, HANA Center, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, The Night Ministry, Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Renz Addiction Counseling Center, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Public Schools, Inger Burnett-Zeigler PhD, Rebecca Carl MD, Tara Gill PhD, Prakash Jayabalan MD, Lisa Kuhns PhD MPH, Tarneka Manning MPH, Holly Manprasio MPH, Matthew O'Brien MD, J.D. Smith PhD, Theresa Sukal-Moulton DPT PhD, Sarah Welch MPH.