

DELIVERING
THE HIGHEST
STANDARDS OF
**CHILD MENTAL
HEALTH CARE**

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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Administrative &
Research Staff, and
Postdocs



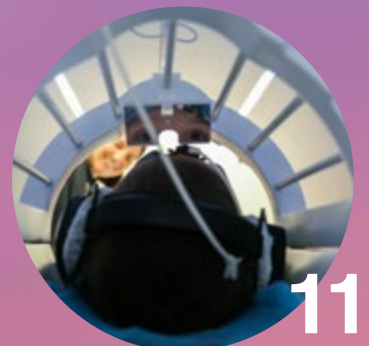
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MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

In the 2021 fiscal year, the coronavirus pandemic continued to challenge us in ways we never imagined. Though we were all personally and/or professionally affected, everyone at our center chose to face the enormous obstacles brought forth by COVID-19 in order to fulfill our mission of delivering the highest standards of child mental health care. I can proudly say our dedication never faltered, and I'd like to share with you some of our accomplishments.

Our clinicians provided behavioral health services to 2,417 children and their families in-person and via telehealth. We also held our summer programs in-person for the first time in two years! These services collectively provided more than 72,000 hours of treatment to 241 children and their families. Additionally, our Summer Reading Explorers Program, which focuses on early literacy, served 45 sites within Miami-Dade County and served an impressive 1,160 children.

Our research and scholarly endeavors did not lag: our faculty held and worked on 55 active research projects totaling \$81.4 million in federal funding; they published 153 research papers in scientific journals; and they received 10 awards for their accomplishments. Our faculty never ceases to impress, and I am grateful for their dedication and hard work.

Our center continued to focus on the important work of disseminating evidence-based practices, and one way we did this was by offering continuing education credits to licensed mental health professionals through our training opportunities. Additionally, our training and continuing education website, Effective Child Therapy, which makes it easy for interested individuals to view the work of renowned experts in the field of mental health, received more than 142,000 views. Furthermore, we provided training to 360 undergraduate students, 152 doctoral and master-level students and 16 postdoctoral fellows.

As I reflect on the immeasurable strength and determination of our faculty, staff and students, as well as the impact we made in our community during such a difficult time, I can't help but be thankful and inspired by what our center achieved in a time of great crisis. I hope you find their efforts, only some of which are highlighted in this report, as inspiring as I do.

Sincerely,

William E. Pelham, Jr., PhD, ABPP
Director
Center for Children and Families
Florida International University



Dr. Pelham is a 1970 graduate of Dartmouth College and earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1976. He was a faculty member at Washington State University, Florida State University, the University Pittsburgh (WPIC), and the State University of New York at Buffalo (Director, Center for Children and Families) prior to moving to Florida International University in 2010, where he is Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry and Director of the Center for Children and Families. He remains an Emeritus SUNY Distinguished Professor of Psychology at SUNY Buffalo and an Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at WPIC.

Affiliated Faculty

Allen, Amanda
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Altszuler, Amy
Azaret, Janelle
Bagner, Daniel
Bahrick, Lorraine
Baralt, Melissa
Buzzell, George
Carson, Tana
Comer, Jonathan
Coxe, Stefany
Cumming, Michelle

Dick, Anthony
Fabiano, Gregory
Fava, Nicole
Furr, Jami
Gonzalez, Raul
Graziano, Paulo
Griffith, Shayl
Hart, Katie
Hawes, Samuel
Hayes, Timothy
Li, Tan
Lupas, Kellina

Mattfeld, Aaron
McMakin, Dana
Musser, Erica
Ng, Mei Yi
Nichols-Lopez, Kristin
Öztekin, Ilke
Page, Timothy
Parent, Justin
Pelham, Jr., William
Pettit, Jeremy
Pruden, Shannon
Qui, Yuxi

Raiker, Jr., Joseph
Reeb-Sutherland,
Bethany
Schatz, Nicole
Shaw, Ashley
Soto Caro, Fabian
Sutherland, Matthew
Timmons, Adela
Trucco, Elisa
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Dominguez, Johanna
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Fernandez, Odette
Frech, Natalie
Freitag, Josefina
Fulwood, Jakayla
Gearhart, Sarah
Genna, Tania
Gil, Lisette
Gnagy, Elizabeth
Gomez, William
Gonzalez, Yeilem
Grande, Katarina
Granja, Karen
Greco, Lucia
Greiner, Andrew
Guaragna, Isabel
Hernandez, Melissa
Herrera, Aileen
Hidmi, Nasreen
Ibanez, Constanza
Leon, Erika
Limia, Jorge
Lurry, Sashay

Madan, Brigitte
Martinez, Natalie
Mira, Sandra
Morales, Gabriela
Moreira, Enid
Nicoletti, Alexandra
Patriarca, Guadalupe
Paula, Dayana
Pineiro, Natsumi
Pita, Katherine
Plata, Carolina
Pulido, William
Purvis, Maria
Raut, Viraj
Ramirez, Ana Regina
Rejman, Emilea
Renaud, Maya
Rengel, Melanie
Rey, Yasmin
Rios, Jhon
Rodriguez, Isabel
Rodriguez, Yesenia
Rodriguez, Zulema
Rodriguez-Perez,
Yanier
Roman Gonzalez,

Yaimara
Ruiz, Ericka
Salem, Hanan
Sanchez Garcia,
Carlos
Santos, Sheila
Santos Soto, Tamara
Shumway, Philip
Silva, Karina
Sotolongo, Lissandra
Torres, Enrique
Tower, Devon
Troya, Sarah
Valdes, Bernardina
Vanegas, David
Vargas Rodriguez,
Maria
Vicente, Elina
Villar, Michelle
Villate, Francisco
Wang, Suyan
Warman, Rachel
Western, Veronica
Wilson, Maria
Zuraw-Moya, Ruth

Postdocs

Altszuler, Amy
Boutris, Panagiotis
Eschman, Bret
Fosco, Whitney

Griffith, Shayl
Kondracki, Anthony
Merrill, Brittany
Monopoli, William

Muncy, Nathan
Osibogun, Olatokunbo
Rondon, Ana
Shaw, Ashley

Spiegel, Jamie
Thompson, Erin
Wells, Erica

OUR MISSION

To improve the lives of children and families struggling with mental health problems by:

Advancing evidence-based knowledge of the causes, mechanisms, outcomes, and interventions for mental health and learning problems of youth

Promoting the development of effective treatments services to children and families in South Florida

Providing state-of-the-art prevention and treatment services to children and families in South Florida

Disseminating knowledge to students, consumers, and professionals in mental health, education and primary care





SERVICES OVERVIEW

Though the coronavirus pandemic negatively impacted our community and the world, we continued providing telehealth and in-person services throughout the year.

>4,500

children and their
families helped!

825
events

Through a partnership with the
Miami-Dade County Public School
District, M-DCPS students were able
to access more than

950 hours

of mental health services free of charge
during the 2020-2021 fiscal year...
more than double the amount from the
prior year!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH HIGHLIGHT



**Parent
Club**

We partnered with The Children's Trust to offer free,
virtual workshops on raising children and teens (0-
12 years old) to be successful, healthy and happy.

773
events

1,160
hours

2,251
families reached

>72,000

hours of treatment in
the summer of 2021
to **241 children and
their families**



CLINICAL SERVICES

PROVIDED TO THE COMMUNITY

Led by psychologist Joseph Raiker, our **After-School Treatment Program (ATP)** is designed for children ages 6-12 at-risk for attention, behavior and academic problems at Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary School. The program works directly with children, their caregivers, administrative staff, and their teachers to improve across multiple settings, including the home, school, and interactions with peers. *Funded by The Children's Trust.*

Led by psychologist Jeremy Pettit, the **Attention Training for Social Anxiety (ATSA)** helps families with youth that have problems related to excessive fears in situations involving other people, also known as social anxiety. *Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.*

Led by psychologist Jami Furr, the **Brave Bunch summer camp** is a one-week program that simulates a classroom environment along with parent training to provide guided opportunities for children with selective mutism. In the camp, children engage in activities that promote verbal participation ("brave talking") and spontaneous speaking.

Led by psychologist Jeremy Pettit, the **Child Anxiety and Phobia Program (CAPP)** provides cognitive-behavioral therapy and computer-based attention training programs to treat fears related to being separated from parents, sleeping alone, going to school, social situations, or specific objects or events. The program also provides services for children and teenagers experiencing depression.

Led by psychologist Daniel Bagner, the **Early Childhood Behavior Program (ECBP)** provides therapeutic interventions to young children from birth to 7 years of age with developmental, social, emotional,

and/or behavioral concerns.

Led by associate professor of applied psycholinguistics Melissa Baralt, our **Háblame Bebé MDC Nurse Family Partnership Program** uses precision home visits to improve how nurse home visitors are coaching mothers on Language Nutrition provision to their infants to maximize their children's bilingual and literacy outcomes.

Led by social worker Nicole Fava, our **Individual Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) program** provides evidence-based treatment for youth ages 3-17. The program teaches youth healthy ways of coping with their feelings, while caregivers learn stress management; and parenting, behavior management and communication skills. *Funded by The Children's Trust.*

Led by psychologist Nicole Schatz, the **CCF clinic** provides individually tailored services to address a wide range of child and adolescent mental health needs including those related to difficulties with mood, anxiety, peer relationships, ADHD, and other behavioral concerns.

Led by psychologist Jonathan S. Comer, the **Mental Health Interventions and Technology (MINT) program** offers cognitive-behavioral therapy for childhood anxiety disorders, selective mutism, and OCD. Service options include in-clinic and telehealth treatments, which use secure videoconferencing to deliver real-time, therapist-led treatment directly to families in their own homes.

Led by psychologist Daniel Bagner, our **Parents And Infants Together in Home-Based Early Remote Services (PANTHERS) Project**

provides support to parents with an infant at risk of developing behavior problems around early childhood behavior and development.

Led by our clinical staff, our **Parenting Strategies Group and Saturday Treatment Program** gives both the child and caregivers the opportunity to learn new skills that will improve the quality of family life. In the program, caregivers learn effective techniques to reduce their child's negative behaviors and promote positive changes at school and the home. At the same time, children learn to develop social skills that promote positive peer relationships by participating in classroom and recreational activities.

Our center offers **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy** for children ages 2-6 who are experiencing behavioral difficulties and emotional disorders. Led by psychologist Paulo Graziano, the program places emphasis on improving the quality of the parent-child relationship and changing parent-child interaction patterns.

Our clinic offers low-cost **psycho-educational evaluations** for families with children ages 4-17 to help with diagnostic status and educational planning. The evaluation includes diagnostic clinical interview with the parent, rating scales, IQ testing, academic achievement testing and more. Parents receive a detailed report and diagnostic feedback, as well as recommendations for further testing or intervention.

Led by psychologist Katie Hart, the **Reading Explorers Program** helps rising kindergarten, 1st, & 2nd graders improve their reading skills. The free program is managed and operated by the CCF, in partnership with Nova Southeastern University. Fully funded by The Children's Trust.

Led by psychologist Jami Furr, our center offers individual weekly, intensive, and group-based treatment programs for children with **selective mutism and other anxiety disorders**. Using cognitive behavioral therapy, our programs target the difficulties of speaking in social or school situations with familiar and unfamiliar peers and adults.

Led by our clinical staff, our center provides **school consultation meetings** with a child's school staff and parents to develop individualized interventions for school-based problems.

The **Supporting Teens Academic Needs Daily (STAND) program** is led by our clinical staff and provides family-based services that help adolescents build organization and academic skills and improve parent-teen communication.

Led by psychologist Katie Hart, the **Summer Academy in Liberty City** is a comprehensive school readiness program adapted from the STP PreK. FIU Summer Academy is fully funded by The Children's Trust and operates in Liberty City at Thena Crowder Early Childhood Diagnostic and Special Education Center. Fully funded by The Children's Trust.

Led by psychologist Amy Altszuler, our nationally acclaimed **Summer Treatment Program** is a comprehensive summer camp program for kids ages 5-12 with ADHD and related behavioral, emotional and learning challenges. Kids receive group and tailored individual treatment plans to improve on their academic functioning/problem-solving/social skills and ability to follow instructions/complete tasks/comply with requests. The program encourages parent involvement with weekly parent

training sessions. Partially funded by The Children's Trust.

Led by psychologist Paulo Graziano, the **STP PreK** is a comprehensive school readiness program for kids entering kindergarten with behavioral, attention, and/or emotional difficulties. This program helps children improve problem-solving, social and academic skills; their ability to focus/follow classroom rules and routines; and emotional functioning, self-control skills and self-esteem. The program encourages parent involvement with weekly parent training sessions. Partially funded by The Children's Trust.

The **Teen Helping Overcome Perceptual Expectations (HOPE) program** offers group cognitive behavioral therapy led by clinical staff, for adolescents displaying depression and/or anxiety symptoms.

Led by clinical staff, our **Teens Power program** helps teens to build effective communication skills, social skills, improve problem-solving skills and learn how to manage challenging situations.





OUR RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

55 active research
projects

Top funded projects in FY 2021:

- FIU-ABCD: Pathways and Mechanisms to Addiction in the Latino Youth of South
- A Summer Program and Afterschool Program for Elementary Aged Children at Risk for Serious Behavior Problems
- Targeting Attention Orienting to Social Threat to Reduce Social Anxiety in Youth

153
research
publications

10 research
awards

Our FY2021 award-winning faculty are:

- Daniel Bagner, PhD
- Tana B. Carson, PhD, OTRL/L
- Jonathan S. Comer, PhD
- Michelle Cumming, PhD
- Justin M. Parent, PhD
- Matthew T. Sutherland, PhD
- Adela C. Timmons, PhD
- Elisa M. Trucco, PhD

\$81.4MM
in research funding

We received funding from:

- Adlon Pharmaceuticals
- American Psychological Foundation
- Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety
- Baptist Health South Florida
- Boston Medical Center/PCORI
- Center for Research on U.S. Latino HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse (CRUSADA)
- Feinberg Foundation
- Home Visiting Applied Research Collaborative: HARC/ Johns Hopkins
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
- Alameda Research LLC
- National Library of Medicine
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)
- National Science Foundation
- Seattle Children's Hospital
- The Children's Trust
- University of Miami
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

Landmark study of adolescent brain development renewed for 7 years

By JoAnn Adkins

The National Institutes of Health awarded a seven-year continuation of the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, providing FIU and 20 other study sites the funding to continue the largest long-term study of brain development and child health ever conducted in the United States.

The renewal provides \$290 million for an additional seven years of research across all the research sites. Launched in 2015, ABCD researchers are following 11,750 children, including 2,100 who are twins or triplets, for at least 10 years starting between the ages of 9 and 10. The new funding will allow researchers to continue understanding how environmental, social, genetic and other biological factors affect brain and cognitive development. FIU's award is for \$14M.

"To date, our FIU ABCD site has completed almost 1,000 MRI scans of participating youth and surpassed our initial goal of enrolling 600 families," said Raul Gonzalez, principal investigator for ABCD at FIU. "We are so grateful to all of the amazing families in our community that have participated in this landmark study."

Researchers are documenting exposures to drugs including nicotine, alcohol and marijuana as well as screen time activities, sleep patterns, engagement in sports and arts, and other variables that may affect brain development, cognitive skills, mental health and other outcomes.

"The next phase of the ABCD study will help us understand the effects of substance use, as well as environmental, social, genetic, and other biological factors on the developing adolescent brain," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "Since the participants are now in their vulnerable middle school years or are beginning high school, this is a critical time to learn more about what enhances or disrupts a young person's life trajectory."

This large research project involves researchers from three FIU Preeminent and Emerging Preeminent Programs (Center for Children and Families, Health Disparities & Inequities, and Brain, Behavior and the Environment. Gonzalez is professor of psychology, psychiatry and immunology, and a faculty member at FIU's Center for Children and Families. Together with co-principal investigator Angela Laird, he is leading the 14-member research team from FIU's College of Arts, Sciences & Education and Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work.

Interviews and behavioral testing with study participants are conducted semi-annually and annually. Neuroimaging data, including high resolution MRI, are collected every two years to measure changes in brain structure and function.

The data — more than 140 terabytes so far — include basic participant demographics, assessments of physical and mental health, substance use, culture and environment, and neurocognition, tabulated structural and functional

neuroimaging data, and minimally processed brain images. The comprehensive dataset, which is disaggregated by sex, racial/ethnic group, and socioeconomic status, allows researchers to address questions that could inform health decisions and policies related to education, nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and prevention of substance use and mental illness.

FIU had the highest proportion of Hispanic/Latino participants from the 21 sites and published one of the first research papers with data from the ABCD cohort, which examined if and how bilingualism relates to cognitive functioning in youth. FIU psychologists Jonathan S. Comer and Anthony Dick, also faculty members at FIU's Center for Children and Families led a study to assess the effects of hurricane related media exposure during Hurricane Irma and its impact on the mental health and brain development of youth.

"The talent and collaborative spirit of our FIU investigators have made an impactful and lasting contribution to this historic national study," Gonzalez said. "We are thrilled to continue this incredibly important study that will help improve the lives of youth for years to come."

In total, 32 research papers have been published nationally to date, which allow for a better understanding of the association between certain traits and experiences in adolescence and brain physiology and other outcomes, such as cognitive ability and mental illness including depression and suicide. Additional data will be released this summer and made available through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Data Archive,

which can be accessed by researchers who obtain a free NIMH Data Archive account.

The ABCD Study was initiated by the Collaborative Research on Addiction at NIH (CRAN), a consortium of institutes that include a focus on addiction research. CRAN comprises NIDA, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Cancer Institute. Other NIH collaborators in this project are the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, the NIH



Office of Research on Women's Health, and the Division of Adolescent and School Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with additional partnerships with the National Institute of Justice, the CDC Division of Violence Prevention, the National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information, please visit the ABCD website at www.ABCDStudy.org

Brain scans may predict **aggressive, antisocial** behavior in teens

By Rosanna Castro

FIU researchers assessed brain scans of nearly 12,000 9- to 11-year-olds searching for clues that could predict antisocial behavior, violence and aggression later in adolescence. After analyzing reward behavior in children, they found that not all conduct problems look the same at the neural level.

Of the nearly 12,000 scans, 995 had disruptive behavior disorders of which 198 also had high-levels of callous unemotional (CU) traits including a lack of empathy, reduced sensitivity to others' emotions and a lack of guilt around breaking rules.

For this study, Samuel Hawes, research assistant professor in the Department of Psychology and faculty member at FIU's Center for Children and Families, was specifically looking at the scans of children with CU traits and how they responded to rewards.

"We wanted to see what happens in the brain when these children anticipate and receive a reward in hopes that we could identify neural risk markers that can be used to inform personalized intervention and treatment efforts," said Hawes. "There's a long history in behavioral research suggesting that youth with severe behavioral

problems have increased reward drive and continue to engage in reward-driven behaviors even when faced with serious punishment and other severe consequences, but previous fMRI results in this area are mixed."

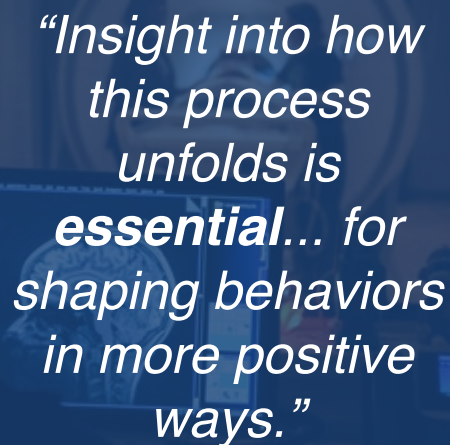
The study, published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, found that relative to typically developing youth, those with behavioral

disorders, including those with CU traits, had decreased activity in the brain's reward network while awaiting their prize but increased brain activity once they obtained it.

"Anticipation and receipt of a reward are associated with different aspects of reward-related decision-making," Hawes says. "We were interested in looking at how brain activity in youth with behavior problems differed from that of typically developing youth."

While lying in an MRI machine, participants were shown one of three colored shapes — a pink circle, yellow square, or blue triangle — signaling that they might win or lose money. After a brief delay, they then saw a target, again one of the colored shapes. To win money or avoid losing it, they had to respond by pressing a button within a certain timeframe.

"At the beginning of each trial, the participant sees how much money they could win. Once the



"Insight into how this process unfolds is essential... for shaping behaviors in more positive ways."

target is presented and they press the button, there's a moment when they anticipate that they're going to be told they've won," said Rebecca Waller, assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania and co-author of the study. "Then they get feedback on the screen saying, 'You've won \$5' or 'You've won nothing' or 'You've lost.' That's the moment of receipt, so there's separation in time between the feeling that they're going to win and when they're told they've actually won."

Hawes says associations between environmental cues and rewards represent a key aspect of learning.

"Insight into how this process unfolds is essential, not only for understanding healthy development versus challenges to normal socialization and development, but also for shaping behaviors in more positive ways," Hawes said.

In a prior study, Hawes and Waller measured gray matter volume in the brain using this same data. They found that compared to typically developing children, those with disruptive behavior disorders had less gray matter in the amygdala and hippocampus, areas associated with processing emotion and forming memories. Published in *Biological Psychiatry: Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuroimaging*, results suggests that early behavior problems do show up in the brain, often regardless of the presence or absence of CU traits.

Data for both studies came from the National Institutes of Health's Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, the largest long-term study of brain development and child health ever conducted in the United States. Launched in 2015, ABCD researchers are following nearly 12,000 9- to 11-year-olds for a decade, to understand how environmental, social, genetic and other biological factors affect brain and cognitive development.

The ABCD site at FIU, which is one of 21 sites nationwide, is led by Raul Gonzalez, professor of psychology, psychiatry and immunology, and a faculty member at FIU's Center for Children and Families. Together with co-principal investigator Angela Laird, he leads the 14-member research team from FIU's College of Arts, Sciences & Education and Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work.



FIU reading program receives **national award for its community impact**

By Rosanna Castro



The Reading Explorers Program at our center was nationally recognized with a Pacesetter Award for supporting early school success and demonstrating observable progress in its summer and afterschool programs.

The award was presented by the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in recognition for the program's efforts to serve more than 2,000 children across Miami-Dade County each year. Some children who were reading below grade level and complete the program improved their reading skills by as much as 50 percent. Since 2013, the program has helped more than 10,000 children and families.

"This work is even more important now given the impact of COVID-19 on our children's learning," said Katie Hart, FIU psychology associate professor and director of the Reading Explorers Program. "We need to come together and leverage our resources to ensure our children are ready to learn, ready to read, and ready to be successful in school and in life."

Managed and operated by the our center in partnership with Nova Southeastern University, the Reading Explorers Program offers year-round services funded by The Children's Trust to providers and families to help improve foundational reading skills for rising kindergarten, first and second graders.

Reading proficiency by third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success, said Hart. In South Florida, only 61 percent of children meet this critical benchmark. Early

intervention is key to ensuring that children enter early school years with the skills needed to be successful readers.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading focuses on promoting reading proficiency by the end of third grade, with a goal of ensuring that children from economically challenged families succeed in school and graduate from high school prepared for college, a career and active citizenship.

The Reading Explorers Program was one of 16 programs nationally recognized as a Pacesetter in the areas of school readiness, school attendance/ chronic absence, summer and afterschool, healthy development, parent success and grade-level proficiency.

"We are both humbled and excited to be awarded the Pacesetter designation for our efforts and the possibility of serving as a model for other communities who are similarly working to ensure grade-level reading for all children," said Angela Waguespack, NSU psychology professor and Reading Explorers Program co-director.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading received 214 self-nominations from 50 communities representing 23 states and one Canadian province. The nominations were considered, sorted and ranked by panels of community-based peer reviewers.

"We are so grateful to be receiving this recognition along with other communities across the country," Hart said. "This work would not be possible without our dynamic community partners, our incredible team of master educators, university students, staff, and administrators, and the continued support from our funders, The Children's Trust."



Researchers study impact of **COVID-19** pandemic on vaping, e-cigarette use among Hispanic teens

By Rosanna Castro

Researchers are investigating how the COVID-19 pandemic is contributing to increased substance use and growing mental health concerns among Hispanic adolescents.

With funding from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, FIU psychologists Elisa Trucco and Matthew Sutherland are looking to find what factors are contributing to vaping and e-cigarette use among Hispanic youth in Miami-Dade County.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that individuals identifying as Hispanics are approximately 2.8 times more likely to contract COVID-19 and 4.6 times more likely to be hospitalized due to virus-related complications.

“Given the unanticipated, sudden, and sustained disruption due to COVID-19, youth are faced with growing uncertainties, new sources of anxiety, and added burdens related to daily routines and schooling, all within the backdrop of family and personal health concerns,” Trucco said. “The impact of these emergent and protracted COVID-19 stressors on youth mental health and substance use are unknown particularly among health disparity populations who may be experiencing greater disruptions.”

Trucco and Sutherland, both researchers at the FIU Center for Children and Families are recruiting participants from the Antecedents and Consequences of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ACE) Project, an ongoing study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to investigate the effects of e-cigarettes, vaping devices and other electronic nicotine delivery systems on adolescents. Both adolescents and caretakers will be asked to complete a series of online questionnaires regarding their COVID experiences, substance use, mental health and resilience.

“Gaining a greater understanding of the impact that COVID-19 experiences may have on substance use and mental health among Hispanic adolescents living in Miami-Dade could inform interventions or policies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on this vulnerable group,” Sutherland said.



FEATURED IN THE MEDIA



MEET GEN C, THE COVID GENERATION

Jonathan Comer, PhD spoke to CNN about how children's longer-term mental health is affected by disaster situations such as COVID-19.



HOW TO SPOT DEPRESSION IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Jonathan Comer, PhD spoke to New York Times about the importance of treating depression early when young children begin displaying symptoms.



IS THE MIAMI KISS-GREETING DEAD?

Jeremy Pettit, PhD spoke to Miami Herald about the different ways people will react to in-person interactions following the COVID-19 lockdowns.



WILL HALLOWEEN CANDY CAUSE MY CHILD TO MISBEHAVE?

Joseph Raiker, PhD writes a piece for Psychology Today addressing the myth that candy causes children to misbehave.



HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU REALLY NEED?

Dana McMakin, PhD writes for The Conversation about the benefits of a good night's sleep and recommended hours of sleep by age group.



HOW THE PANDEMIC IS AFFECTING LITTLE ONES' BEHAVIOR (AND WHAT TO DO)

Daniel Bagner, PhD speaks to The Bump about ways parents encourage positive behaviors during the pandemic.



TRAINING & EDUCATION



386

Continuing Education
units provided to
licensed mental
health professionals

9

virtual Speaker
Series talks

142,512

views on our
Effective Child
Therapy videos

12

National Institute
on Drug Abuse T32
publications

Clinical Science

Acosta Lievano,
Juliana
Akbar, Saima
Blizzard, Angela
Bose, Deepika
Buitron, Victor
Cabrera, Victoria
Campez, Mileini
Conroy, Kristina
Coto, Jennifer
Cristello, Julie
Cummings, Logan
Dale, Chelsea
Dimarzio, Karissa
Duong, Jacqueline
Duperrouzel,
Jacqueline

Fallah-Sohy,
Nilofar
Feeney, Kathleen
Frederick, Jennifer
Freitag, Gabrielle
Garcia, Alexis
Georgiadis,
Christopher
Gillenson, Caroline
Goodman, Allison
Gregg, Della
Gutierrez Renzulli,
Akira
Hagan, Mary
Hare, Megan
Hartmann, Sarah
Heflin, Brynna

Hernandez,
Melissa
Heymann, Perrine
Hong, Natalie
Jones, Lindsey
Jusko, Morgan
Landis, Taylor
Lane, Terrance
Laroche, Christelle
Lehman, Sarah
Macphee, Fiona
Merrill, Brittany
Morris, Stephanie
Obee, Averill
Pacheco-Colon,
Ileana
Patriarca,

Guadalupe
Pintos, Lobo, Rosario
Poznanski, Bridget
Ramos, Marcela
Sanchez, Amanda
Sisitsky, Michaela
Smith, Jessica
Sollenberger,
Nathan
Vaclavik, Daniella
Wolenski, Rebecca
Yeguez, Carlos
Zambrana,
Katherine
Zhao, Xin (Alisa)

Cognitive Neuroscience

Bottenhorn,
Katherine
Crooks, Katharine
Draper, Adam
Flannery, Jessica

Hays, Jason
Hosseini, Seyede
Jayachandran,
Maanasa
Kimble, Adam

Martin, Emily
Narasiwodeyar,
Sanjay
Pankey, Brianna
Reeders, Puck

Renfro, Amanda
Viera Perez,
Patricio
Zahedi, Leila

Developmental Psychology

Clifford, Christopher
Contino, Kaityn
Edgar, Elizabeth
Garic, Dea

Gonzalez, Sandy
Hall, LaTreese
Lunn, Stephanie
Mcnew, Myriah

Metaweh, Maria
Neuman, Keara
Nunez, Maria
Petrulla, Victoria

Ramirez, Bethany
Ramos, Michelle
Vieites, Vanessa

Professional Counseling Psychology

Arencibia, Diamela
Barrios, Kendall
Battenfield,
Kristian
Beltran, Natalia
Bour, Lisa
Brito, Ana
Busto, Carolina
Cardenas, Cassandra
Caro, Bailey
Castro, Andres
De Los Santos,
Yailene

Dias Roncoletta,
Giulia
Galvez, Ibel
Garcia, Luis
Gearhart, Sarah
Gonzalez, Yeilem
Granja, Karen
Habib, Sana
Jacklin, Kellcee
Kingsawat, Atithan
Lawrence, Sabrina
Leon, Daniela
Loisel, Christina

Mateo-Rivera,
Chrysta
Medrano, Melanie
Mizrahi, Jessica
Moenck, Karina
Moor, Alexandra
Moreira, Omar
Paisley, Victoria
Peredo, Carolina
Pineiro, Natsumi
Rivas, Maria
Rodriguez, Helen
Shaffer, Giovanna

Shani, Dana
Stoian, Mihaela
Toledo, Zomy
Torres, Orianna
Urtiaga, Elisa
Valdez, Aileen
Vazquez, Josh
Vilau, Lauren
Walker, Audi
Warman, Rachel
Wong, Claudia
Yelencsics, Sarah
Zorrilla, Esther

Other Doctoral Students

Flores, Helen
Park, Jeehyun

Zuniga, Rochelle
Abtahiforooshani, Zahrasadat



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The logo for Florida International University (FIU) is displayed in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters 'F', 'I', and 'U' are connected, with the 'I' being slightly narrower. A thin horizontal line is positioned directly beneath the letters.

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