

# Young Child and Parent Project: Improving the Well-being and Safety of Families with Parental Substance Abuse

## Statement of Problem

The widespread, ongoing opioid and heroin epidemic in the United States has garnered a lot of necessary attention regarding the impact substance use disorders have on families. In the U.S., about 1 in 8 children, totaling nearly 9 million, most under the age of 5, live in homes with at least one parent who has a substance use disorder. It's well known that young children of parents with substance use disorders are at substantially increased risk for psychological and emotional problems. As they grow older, these children may experience anxiety, depression, poor school performance and their own substance use disorders.

Families in Philadelphia and the surrounding communities have felt the effects of the opioid epidemic for years. Unfortunately, there are significant barriers to mothers enrolling in and completing programs to address the family impact of parental substance use disorder. In addition to systems-level barriers to availability of mother-baby treatment options, insurance considerations, and other accessibility challenges, a mother's own trauma and current substance use can significantly impact her engagement with therapeutic interventions. Without proper treatment for their substance use disorder, mothers may struggle to bond with their young children and thrive in their role as a caregiver.

This challenge is particularly acute for the critical parenting skill of reflective functioning, or a parent's understanding of their own emotions and those of their child. Several recent interventions have found ways to support mothers with substance use disorder in acquiring reflective parenting skills while completing substance use treatment. This in turn decreases their chances for relapse after treatment, as well as the risk of having their children placed in foster care.

## Description

The Young Child and Parent Project, in collaboration with the Health Federation of Philadelphia, seeks to improve child and parent well-being, child permanency, and safety outcomes of young children at risk of or already involved in the child welfare system using a novel therapeutic model, known as MIO-CPP, for pregnant and parenting individuals in residential substance use disorder programs.

In the first phase of this project, we evaluated the impact of integrating and delivering two evidence-based models—Mothering from the Inside Out (MIO) and Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)—to mothers enrolled in substance use treatment programs in Philadelphia and Bucks Counties. We have completed enrollment for this phase, and we are currently examining participant outcomes related to maternal mental health, parental reflective functioning and child well-being. Our preliminary findings showed that participants from residential SUD treatment programs remained engaged in MIO-CPP services for longer than their peers receiving outpatient SUD treatment services. Early qualitative findings indicate that MIO-CPP positively impacts mothers' capacity to understand their young children's needs. We also found that a high level of case management and

supportive services for the whole family are needed during a mother's transition from residential treatment back to community life.

In the next phase of this project, we will continue our mixed-methods evaluation of the implementation of this model—assessing parental/caregiver depression, substance use disorder treatment recovery rates and involvement of young children in the child welfare system—while also studying the impact of including certified recovery specialists with specialized training in maternal and child health as part of the clinical team providing supports as mothers transition out of treatment. We will conduct a quasi-experimental trial to compare the outcomes of participants enrolled in MIO-CPP therapy who did and did not receive services from a certified recovery specialist. We also seek to understand the cross-system collaboration and communication needed to ensure that treatment services are meeting the needs of mothers and young children with or at risk of child welfare involvement.

## **Next Steps**

This is five-year project that will begin enrolling patients in 2023, with integration of the certified recovery specialists scheduled for 2025. Following implementation, we will work with the Health Federation of Philadelphia on our continued evaluation of the intervention to understand if we were able to increase mothers' and children's well-being, improve permanency of a child in their home and enhance the safety of children of parents with substance use disorders.

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## **PolicyLab Leads**

**Meredith Matone**  
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**Director**

Dr. Matone's research interests include maternal and young child health, as well as family well-being. She focuses on building community and public agency research partnerships to support improvements in policies and programs that serve mothers and infants in under-resourced communities. She is experienced in large-scale program evaluation, mixed-methods research designs, and use of administrative data for observational study designs in areas of child and caregiver health.

Dr. Matone is a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, a faculty affiliate at The Field Center, and a board member of the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Youth Children. Dr. Matone received her Doctor of Public Health, specializing in child and adolescent health and development, from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She is an alumnus of the Doris Duke Fellowship for the Promotion of Child Well-being program and a former Stoneleigh Foundation fellow.



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## Team

### **Doug Strane** **MPH**

#### **Research Scientist**

Doug Strane (he/him) is a research scientist at PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Mr. Strane is experienced in mixed methods program evaluation and analysis of administrative data for observational study designs related to child and family health. His research interests include the ways in which health systems can address social determinants of health; the changing health insurance landscape for families; and the intersection of parenting and substance use disorder. He also serves as the senior evaluation manager at CHOP's Center for Health Equity.

Mr. Strane received his Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from University of Michigan School of Public Health. He is a former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Associate Program fellow.



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## **Katherine Kellom**

### **Administrative Manager**

Katherine Kellom (she/they) is an administrative manager at PolicyLab and the director of the Qualitative Research Core at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She has worked at nationally top-ranked institutions with teams comprised of experts in their fields conducting qualitative, mixed and multi-method research for more than ten years. Beginning as a research assistant at the University of Pennsylvania's Mixed Methods Research Lab, Katherine currently serves across a variety of project teams to provide conceptual and technical support for clinical and community-based research projects. She has extensive knowledge and valuable practical experience applying qualitative research methodologies with a focus on integrating key stakeholder perspectives and goals into research designs.

Katherine leads and advises project teams using qualitative methods to achieve research aims on projects ranging from small pilots to state-wide, mixed-methods evaluations. Katherine is an expert in facilitation techniques and in the use of the qualitative data analysis tool, NVivo; she provides training in both areas. As director of the Qualitative Research Core, Katherine manages and supports staff members and qualitative team members in the Core and at PolicyLab, ensuring skillset development and access to the resources needed to contribute high-quality work to various project teams.

Katherine received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bryn Mawr College in 2009, majoring in psychology.



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## **Katie Wu**

### **MPH**

### **Clinical Research Project Manager**

Katie Wu (she/her) is a clinical research project manager at PolicyLab and the Qualitative Research Core at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In this role, she works on qualitative and quantitative projects across many content areas with a particular interest in social determinants of health and maternal child health programs. She is passionate about applying high-quality and trauma-informed qualitative methodology to center patient, family and community voices.

Ms. Wu has qualitative expertise in program implementation and evaluation, semi-structured interviewing, and qualitative data analysis. She has experience training students and teams in qualitative data analysis methods

and software. Her recent qualitative work includes a multi-method evaluation of a Utah-based social needs screening and community health worker program and a multi-method evaluation of a therapy model aiming to improve parent-child attachment for parents in substance use disorder treatment.

Ms. Wu also has experience working on population-based quantitative projects at PolicyLab, including a project examining trends in psychotropic medication prescribing to children enrolled in Medicaid. She received her bachelor's degree in biology and her Master of Public Health from the University of Pennsylvania.



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## **Thais Costa Macedo de Arruda**

### **Clinical Research Coordinator**

Thais Arruda is a clinical research coordinator at PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). She joined CHOP in 2024 as a student clinical assistant and has since contributed to projects aimed at improving child and maternal health. Thais enjoys mixed-methods and community based participatory research.

She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Neuroscience from Temple University, where she focused her studies on the intersection between neuroscience and public health. Prior to joining CHOP, she worked as a research assistant in various projects involving substance use recovery, childhood trauma, and mental health outcomes. Thais is passionate about improving health outcomes for children and mothers and plans to continue developing expertise as she pursues future academic or professional goals.



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### **Funders of Project**

Children's Bureau, Regional Partnership Grant, Cohort 5

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