Meet the Latest Clinical Futures and PolicyLab Pilot Grants Awardees

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In January 2026, Clinical Futures and PolicyLab announced the awardees of the 2025 Fall Pilot Grant Program. Jointly administered by Clinical Futures and PolicyLab, this program fosters innovation in health services research and clinical practice through grants to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia researchers with promising early-stage projects in one of four areas:

- Clinical effectiveness studies
- Policy-oriented health services research studies
- Studies that may generate a clinical trial
- Studies that may generate hybrid effectiveness-implementation trials

We are excited to fund six projects this cycle. They seek to answer a range of questions, from how best to improve asthma treatment and evaluate generative AI in pediatrics to how multiple economic support programs affect birth outcomes. We are grateful to the Health Equity Research Methods Initiative (HERMes) for their support of two of these projects.

PolicyLab also announced one Partnership Development Award grantee in its 2025 Fall Community Partnerships In Research Program (CPIR) cycle. This program aims to fund activities that initiate or nurture early-stage community-academic partnerships. It also aims to prepare investigators and their community partners to apply for a CPIR Joint Pilot Project Award, which funds community-academic partnered research projects for two years.

Together, these seven investigators and their teams reflect the breadth of innovative, high-impact research across our centers. Hear directly from each project lead about what inspires them about these new research efforts:

Clinical Futures/PolicyLab Pilot Grant Program Awardees

Michael Luke, MD, MSPH; Chén Kenyon, MD, MSHP; Jordan Wood, MPH
Prevalence and Predictors of Guideline-Discordant Albuterol Co-Prescribing among Hospitalized Children with Asthma on SMART

This award is part of the Clinical Futures Implementation Science Track. It is supported in part by the HERMes Initiative. Dr. Luke shared what inspires him about this project:

"We're excited to continue research on how to improve the evidence-to-practice gap for some of our highest risk children with asthma. SMART is a type of asthma therapy now recommended for children with moderate persistent asthma that no longer involves albuterol. Since many families and doctors have relied on albuterol for decades, we want to study how often albuterol is still recommended and used for kids discharged from the hospital who should be taking SMART."

Brooke Luo, MD; Halley Ruppel, PhD, RN; James Won, PhD; Eric Shelov, MD; Kenrick Cato, PhD, RN
Clinician-Led Evaluation and Assessment of Responsible AI (CLEAR-AI): Developing an evaluation framework for the use of generative AI in pediatrics

Part of the Clinical Effectiveness Track, this award is jointly sponsored by the Clinical Futures and PolicyLab? Pilot Grant program. Dr. Luo said of this project:

"The evolution of generative AI has been fast and transformative, with profound implications for how clinical work will be done in the future. With this Clinical Futures grant, we're excited to work together to begin understanding clinician and family values around effective use of AI tools so they can be applied intentionally and in data-driven ways that support efficiency, patient care, and safety, while thoughtfully minimizing the risk of introducing new harm."

Tracy Waasdorp, PhD; Brooke Paskewich, PsyD
Advancing Early Childhood Socioemotional Skills and Aggression Prevention: Partnering to Refine the Novel Friendship Explorers Program

Also part of the Clinical Effectiveness Track, Dr. Waasdrop wrote:

"Peer bullying among children is a pervasive public health issue, often with an interconnected web of challenges that occur before the pivotal experience of bullying occurs. Preventing bullying requires early intervention, yet a lack of practical, easy-to-implement, evidence-based programming remains a significant hurdle, especially for young children entering elementary school. Our Friendship Explorers program, which teaches social-emotional skills and anti-bullying strategies to 1st and 2nd?graders, was developed by our team to fill this gap and showed promising results in a pilot study. However, we also found that additional adaptation is necessary to improve its feasibility, and therefore funding from PolicyLab and Clinical Futures offers us the important and exciting opportunity to advance our commitment to working directly with elementary school teachers to refine the curriculum and address real-world barriers to implementation. By focusing on the 'how,' we are transforming a promising program into a practical, scalable, and sustainable program that can provide foundational social skills to children they can build on over time, and meaningful support for educators to foster safer, kinder classrooms."

Aditi Vasan, MD, MSHP; Jordan Wood, MPH; Meredith Matone, DrPH, MPH; Chén Kenyon, MD, MSHP; Xianqun Luan, MS; Yixuan Feng, MS
Association of Prenatal Exposure to Economic Support Programs with Risk of Adverse Birth Outcomes

Part of the PolicyLab Pilot Grant program, Health Policy Track, Jordan Wood shared:

"This work will help us understand how to enhance?infants' chances at healthy, thriving futures, starting at birth. ?Using evidence, this research can?inform?future policymaking to embed and advance critical?material, nutrition, and financial resources?for pregnant people in order to improve birth outcomes, particularly for those most at risk."

Madeline Perry, MD; Scott Lorch, MD, MSCE; Dave Grande, MD, MPA; Ashley Martin, MPH
Implementation of Medicaid coverage of doula services: a qualitative study of Medicaid and public health stakeholders
PolicyLab Pilot Grant program, Health Policy Track

Funded in part by HERMes, this project is sponsored by PolicyLab as part of its Health Policy Track. Wrote Dr. Perry:

"A maternal morbidity and mortality crisis in the United States still exists, but we have data-driven opportunities to intervene, and one of those is access to doula services - especially for those insured by Medicaid. I am inspired by the diverse, collaborative community that has already dedicated time and effort to expanding Medicaid policy to provide coverage for doula services in many states. I am honored to be able to build off this work to evaluate how implementation of these policies can be optimized so that doula services are even more accessible."

Polina Krass, MD, MSHP; Scott Jelinek, MD, MPH, MAEd; Renata Arrington Sanders, MD, MPH
Enhancing Adolescent Suicide Mortality Risk Classification through Clinical Data Integration

Also sponsored by PolicyLab as part of its Health Policy Track, Dr. Krass shared:

"Suicide is the second leading cause of death in adolescents. Every day in our Emergency Department and Adolescent Medicine clinic, we care for teenagers who share that they are experiencing distress, and we know that even our best current interventions do not always prevent harm. We are inspired to understand how we can more accurately identify youth at high risk of suicide, and to translate that knowledge into meaningful, equitable interventions that decrease suicide death."

PolicyLab Community Partnerships in Research – Partnership Development Award

Sarah MacLean, MD from CHOP's Department of Pediatrics and Dr. Unangoni Bulawayo from? Nyangabgwe Hospital in Francistown, Botswana?
Improving Neonatal Outcomes at Nyangabgwe Hospital, Francistown, Botswana

Sponsored by the PolicyLab Community Partnerships in Research program, this Partnership Development Award?provides funding to seed new or emerging relationships between CHOP investigators and community partners. Dr. Maclean said:

"Our project is focused on understanding neonatal mortality in Botswana and it's inspiring that the idea for and execution of the project have been driven by the local pediatricians. While those of us at CHOP can utilize our research infrastructure and expertise to support our colleagues in Botswana, they have been taking the lead at every step because they're motivated to improve the conditions in their community."

Beth Hallowell
Beth Hallowell
PhD
Communications Director