



EDNA BENNETT PIERCE  
PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER

TRANSFORMING SCIENCE AND  
PRACTICE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS



**PennState**  
College of Health and  
Human Development

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Prevention science plays a vital role in human health and well-being. The enormous benefits of prevention efforts—in terms of reduced economic burden and human suffering—are undeniable. Imagine a world in which future cases of gun violence, substance use disorder, and child maltreatment are stopped before they even begin. Although it can be difficult to recognize the benefits of prevention in today's world, we need only be mindful of the world around us and notice positive outcomes in youth, families, and communities—and know that important factors have been at work, often for many years, to contribute to those successes.

In 1998, Mark Greenberg joined the faculty at Penn State and established the Prevention Research Center to focus on building and disseminating evidence-based solutions to prevent negative outcomes, including adolescent behavior problems, poor parenting, and academic failure. Early on, Mark identified a key partner in his efforts to build this internationally renowned research center: Edna Bennett Pierce. The impact of Edna's early investment in the Center has multiplied over the years, and her devotion to its growth and impact remain strong today.

The Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center shares the College of Health and Human Development's mission to enrich human well-being and strengthen intellectual, social, physical, economic, and emotional wellness. Our center is an intellectual hub, research engine, and springboard for programming around understanding the causes of social problems and building an evidence-base for their solutions. Our shared values cross disciplinary boundaries: **Collaboration. Compassion. Curiosity. Impact. Integrity.**

The future of prevention science will integrate advances made in technology and biomedical research; it will be sensitive to the changing needs of our population and the diversity among us; it will focus on promoting human flourishing; it will influence policymakers at all levels of the government; and it will continue to advance us toward an even brighter future.



**Stephanie T. Lanza**  
C. Eugene Bennett Chair in Prevention Research  
Director, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center  
Interim Director, Consortium to Combat Substance Abuse  
Professor of Biobehavioral Health



## OUR FOCUS AREAS

The Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center has been leading the field of prevention science since 1998, using research to create programs and inform policies that promote the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.



## TESTIMONIAL



The PRC is a world leader in prevention science, its faculty are internationally known for their cutting-edge research on the prevention of health problems. Our students and faculty routinely access articles, briefings and trainings led by PRC faculty.



**Prevention Science Institute, University of Oregon**

# OUR PROGRAMS

BENEFIT PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

## We “Do” Prevention Science.

At the PRC, we work at the intersection of research, technology and practice to replace risky behaviors with protective behaviors and promote human flourishing.

We work with individuals, families and communities to help prevent addiction, physical and mental illness, adolescent behavior problems, academic failure, domestic violence, and more.

Our work doesn’t stop with science. Programs developed by the PRC and its faculty affiliates are being used across the globe. Here is a sampling:

### Family Foundations

The Family Foundations program, funded by the National Institutes for Health, is a transition-to-parenthood program for couples that has demonstrated positive long-term impacts on children’s mental and behavioral health. By developing and practicing communication skills in 8 sessions before and after birth, couples build supportive co-parenting relationships—thereby reducing parental stress, depression, conflict and violence. We are now testing adaptations of the program for high-risk groups such as low-income couples, pregnant teens, heavy alcohol users, parents of a child with autism, and military families. The program has been adapted for research

and use in countries on five continents; the Coparenting Relationship Scale, a measure developed and validated in the course of research on Family Foundations, has been translated and adapted for use in about 18 countries. Developer: Mark Feinberg



### Head Start/REDI (Research-based, Developmentally Informed)

The REDI program was developed at Penn State as a way to build upon the existing Head Start program, which provides preschool education to low-income children. The REDI program aims to improve social and emotional skills, as well as early literacy and listening skills, by incorporating stories, puppets and other activities that introduce concepts like understanding feelings, cooperation, friendship skills and self-control skills. This program is funded by the National Institutes of Health, which has also funded the development of REDI programming for parents, an adapted version of REDI for childcare centers, and a longitudinal follow-up study of preschool participants through high school. Developer: Karen Bierman



### HealthWise South Africa

Two studies, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, aimed to address HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and substance use and promote positive use of free time among South African high school students in low income areas in the Western Cape. Collaborating with colleagues in South Africa, researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the HealthWise curriculum. In the second study, they sought to understand factors that increased implementation fidelity. Over 16,000 youth and approximately 70 teachers across 56 schools provided data. Developers: Linda Caldwell and Edward Smith



### PATHS® (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)

The PATHS® curriculum, developed with funding from the National Institutes of Health, is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. This innovative curriculum is designed to be used by educators and counselors in a multi-year, universal prevention model. Developers: Mark Greenberg, Carol A. Kusché, Celene Domitrovich, Rebecca Cortes

### Power of Parents

The Power of Parents program empowers parents of middle school and high school students to have ongoing, intentional conversations about the dangers and consequences of underage drinking. All program materials were written by and based upon the research of Robert Turrissi. The books and brochures for middle school and high school students are available in English and Spanish, and have been reaching a new family every 15 minutes for the past 8-10 years, according to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Developer: MADD, in consultation with Robert Turrissi



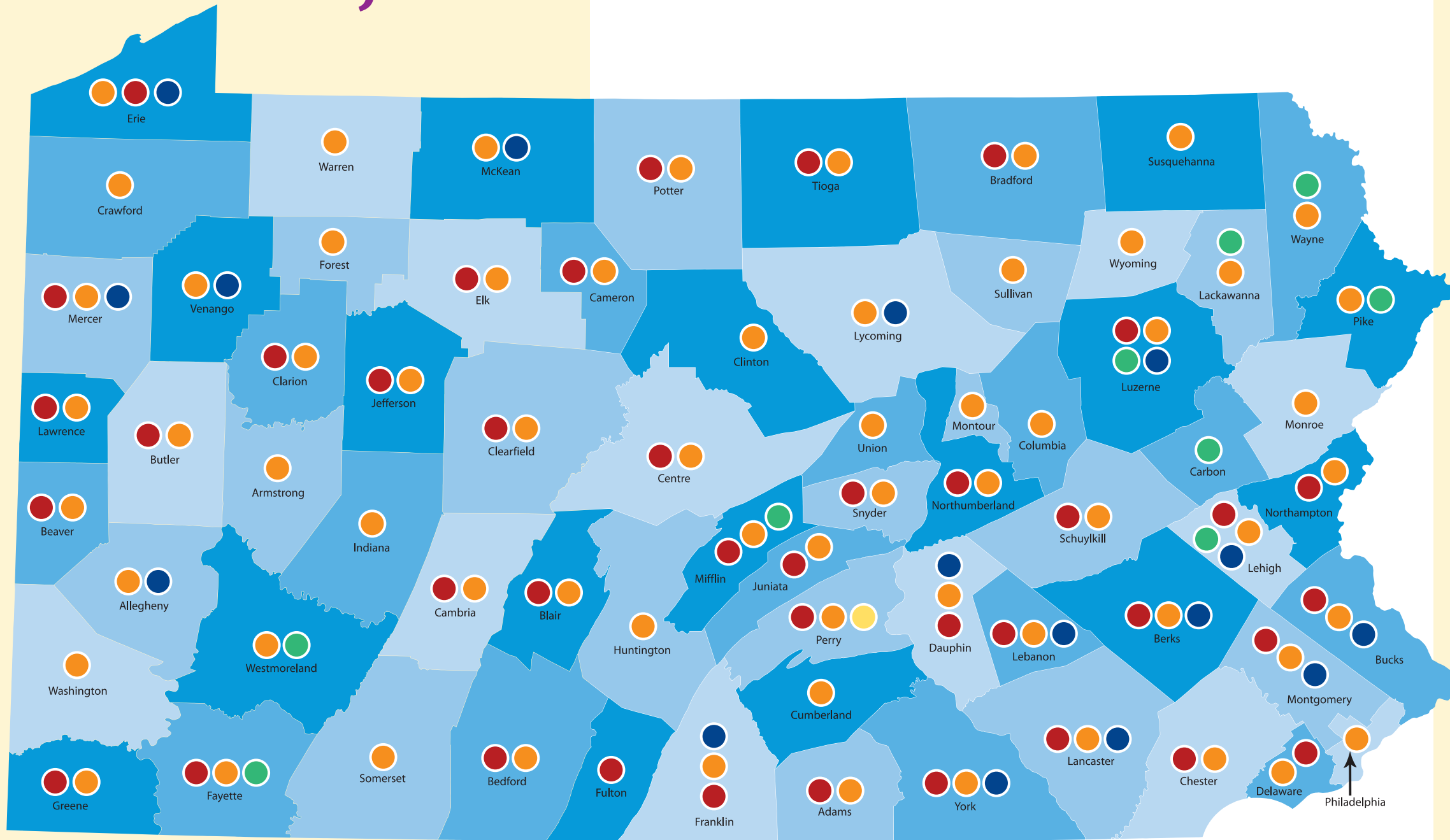
## TESTIMONIAL

“The PRC’s impressive presence at our Society for Prevention Research conference, year after year, is just one indication of its influence in the world of prevention science. Each and every year, the conference program highlights the PRC’s outstanding, wide-ranging, cutting-edge contributions to our field, whether they be in the arenas of intervention, implementation/scale-up and policy research, or innovative methodologies, or training our next

generation of prevention scientists. Most notably, over the years, these contributions clearly are translating to ongoing, positive impacts on the health and well-being of our children, families and communities.”

**Richard Spoth, Ph.D.**  
F. Wendell Miller Senior Prevention Scientist  
Director, Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute  
Iowa State University

# PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS



The EPISCenter supports the dissemination, quality implementation, sustainability, and impact assessment of a menu of proven-effective prevention and intervention programs, and conducts original translational research to advance the science and practice of evidence-based prevention.

## SPEP™

The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™) is a scoring system that is used to estimate the impact of juvenile justice programs on reducing recidivism. The SPEP is a validated and data-driven rating system for evaluating effectiveness of juvenile justice programs.

The EPISCenter works closely with juvenile probation departments and juvenile justice service providers to conduct the SPEP. From preparing for the SPEP, to making sense of the assessment findings, to performance improvement, our staff are involved every step of the way.



The PROSPER (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience) delivery system supports the sustained, quality delivery of scientifically-proven programs for middle-school youth and their families. The programs offered through PROSPER have a successful track record of preventing risky behavior in youth, promoting positive youth development, and strengthening families. Our partnership approach includes ongoing evaluation and technical assistance to ensure that programs are implemented as intended, teams continue to perform effectively, and partnership goals are being met.

## Community Coalitions

Research has consistently shown that community coalitions can produce positive health and behavioral outcomes for children and families. Communities That Care (CTC) is a framework for helping communities to use local data to assess their needs and then to select and implement evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that will address the problems they face and leverage their strengths. We support CTC and other coalition models throughout Pennsylvania.

## TESTIMONIAL

“The Prevention Research Center has been a pioneer in supporting the strong implementation of tested effective prevention interventions, and building community and state prevention infrastructure to build self-regulating communities to reduce adolescent problems and promote youth development.”

**Richard F. Catalano, Ph.D.**  
Co-founder, Social Development Research Group,  
School of Social Work, University of Washington

## LEGEND

- EPIS-supported Community Coalitions (since 2010)
- EPIS/PRC support for Evidenced-Based Practices (since 2000)
- PROSPER sites (since 2002)
- EPIS-supported Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™) counties (since 2011)

Serving Penn State’s land grant mission to support individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service.

We support dissemination and implementation of evidence-based programs with fidelity.



## Policy Briefs on Social and Emotional Learning

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the PRC have embarked on a journey create policy briefs about social and emotional learning (SEL), to inform educators, leadership and policymakers. To date, current research has been synthesized and briefs produced for 10 key SEL topics: evidence-based practices in infancy, the preschool years, and in the elementary, middle and high school contexts, as well as briefs on school climate, teacher stress, parent involvement, the role of peer relations, equity, and the economic benefits of social and emotional learning investments. A summary brief was also produced. Additional briefs are being prepared with a focus on “what’s next” in terms of innovative strategies with potential to address the critical remaining challenges and opportunities for the sustainable scaling of SEL in families, schools and communities.

## The Science of Using Prevention Science to Impact Policy

Through support from the William T. Grant, Susan and Michael Dell and Doris Duke Charitable Foundations, members of the PRC are working to grow scientific inquiry into how to best translate prevention science for policy audiences and facilitate its use in public policy decision-making. This includes better understanding how and when prevention research is being used in policy settings, modeling how

policymakers’ beliefs, perspectives and backgrounds influence their legislative behavior, and conducting experimental research influencing policymakers’ behavior around the use of prevention research. Initiatives include the Research-to-Policy Collaboration Model, federal and state messaging trials, and rapid response efforts to meet the growing demands for scientific evidence in policy contexts.

## The National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives

The National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives (NPSC), housed within the PRC, was formed as a vehicle to facilitate the use of prevention science findings and evidence-based practices to improve social conditions that otherwise contribute to poor mental, behavioral and physical health. The NPSC is comprised of more than 700 scientists, educators, clinicians, practitioners, community stakeholders, policymakers and advocates, and is formally affiliated with nearly 70 national organizations and agencies. Domains of interest include inequalities and disparities, mental health, substance misuse, poverty, juvenile justice, child development and welfare, violence, and police-community relations, just to name a few. NPSC is uniquely situated to communicate scientifically-backed information directly to members of congress, as well as state legislative offices in the form of congressional briefings, in-person meetings, policy statements, op-eds and other media. In addition, NPSC is coordinating the formation of a new Congressional Prevention Policy Caucus on Capitol Hill.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Penn State’s **Administrative Data Accelerator** leverages administrative data to accelerate the research-to-impact process, supporting **60+ faculty, 30+ active research projects, and 21+ active grants.**

TO OUR FUNDERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT:

- American Psychological Association
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Bringing Theory to Practice
- Michael and Susan Dell Foundation
- Mind and Life Institute
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- United States Department of Agriculture
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
- Health Resources and Service Administration
- National Institutes of Health
  - Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
  - National Cancer Institute
  - National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health
  - National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
  - National Institute on Drug Abuse
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- William T. Grant Foundation

### Subcontracts with:

- Duke University
- Kent State University
- Northwestern University
- New York University
- Portland State University
- Texas State University
- University of California at Los Angeles
- University of Miami
- University of Minnesota
- University of North Carolina
- University of Rochester
- University of Wisconsin
- Utah State University

### BY THE NUMBERS



**86**  
Prevention and Methodology Scholars Trained

*\*funded through the National Institute on Drug Abuse T32 Prevention and Methodology Training (PAMT) Program*

We are grateful for the ongoing support from Edna Bennett Pierce, Mark Greenberg, Christa Turksma, and Penn State’s Social Science Research Institute.

**Penn State SELF (Student Engagement, Learning and Flourishing)**

Research team: Stephanie Lanza, Gregory Fosco, H. Harrington (Bo) Cleveland

Penn State SELF is an intensive study of the health and well-being of a key population: Penn State undergraduate students across the Commonwealth. The data, to include 21 daily assessments and DNA, will serve as a resource for Penn State researchers studying young adult flourishing and provide the University with information that could enhance student experiences. This project is funded as part of Penn State's Strategic Initiative Funding program, with co-sponsorship from the Social Science Research Institute and the Huck Institutes for the Life Sciences.



**The Family Life Project; Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO)**

Research team: Lisa Gatzke-Kopp, Clancy Blair, Lynn Vernon-Feagans

This project leverages unique data on early childhood second hand smoke exposure and the implications for long-term child developmental outcomes in a large sample of children followed from birth to age 19. This work will examine the detrimental effects of secondhand smoke on cognitive, social, educational and substance use trajectories into the young adult years.

**Mindfulness for College Students: The Art and Science of Human Flourishing Course**

Research team: Robert Roeser, Blake Colaianne, Mark Greenberg

Penn State, along with the University of Virginia and the University of Wisconsin, is conducting a quasi-experimental, matched-control group study using pre- and post-test data from college students taking "The Art and Science of Human Flourishing" to evaluate possible outcomes from the course, including increases in mindfulness, empathy, and compassion; an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose; improvements in mental health; and decreases in anxiety and depressive symptoms.

**"Watch Over: Using Apple Watches to Assess and Predict Substance Co-use in Young Adults"**

Research team: Saeed Abdullah, Ashley Linden-Carmichael

The goal of this study is to observe substance use (alcohol, marijuana, vaping, and other drugs) and the combined use of multiple substances in young adults' daily lives. Participants will respond to questions on either an Apple Watch or an iPhone in real time about their substance use, stress level, mood, and social context. We hope to gain insight about the emotional and situational conditions under which substance use and co-use occur to deliver intervention content to their own devices in moments of greatest risk.



**Project OPTIONS: Examining the Efficacy of a Brief, Physician-Delivered Behavioral Intervention to Reduce Skin Cancer Risk**

Research team: Kimberly Mallett, Robert Turrisi, Elizabeth Billingsley (Milton S. Hershey Medical Center)

The OPTIONS study seeks to combat the rising incidence and mortality of skin cancer which is the most common malignancy in the U.S. We developed a brief, 2-3 minute intervention designed to enhance patients' use of sun protection, delivered by dermatologists. Patients who received the intervention reported significantly fewer sunburns and increased their use and consistent reapplication of sunscreen across 3 months.



**Healthy Bodies Project: Modifying Family and Preschool Environments to Prevent Obesity**

Research team: Lori Francis, Kathleen Keller, Michelle Mannino, Robert Nix, Brandi Rollins, Jennifer Savage Williams

The Healthy Bodies Project aims to evaluate the efficacy of a multi-component program to prevent obesity in children by: (1) increasing children's healthy eating knowledge, (2) increasing physical activity, (3) increasing self-regulatory capacity, and (4) providing guidance to parents/caregivers about appropriate parenting strategies that promote healthy growth and development in children.



**"Alexa, I'm in pain!" A Real-Time Mindfulness Intervention to Control Pain: Delivery Through a Conversational Agent**

Research team: Saeed Abdullah, Sebrina Doyle

This project will leverage the Amazon Alexa ecosystem to deliver interactive, personalized mindfulness practices based on techniques from the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program to support pain management strategies that can reduce opioid use in a low-cost, scalable, and accessible way. This project will evaluate how well this platform can build trust and rapport and obtain sustained high engagement with practices over a long period of time.

**Better Together: Advancing STEM and Social Emotional Learning Through Pre-K Play**

Research team: Karen Bierman, Meg Small, Lynn Liben, Jessica Menold, Scarlett Miller, Jennifer Connell, Sabrina Voltaire

Discovering that most STEM toys such as puzzles and blocks emphasize cognitive skills but limit parent-child experiences that support exploration, creativity, and joint problem solving, an interdisciplinary team is designing new play experiences that engage both parents and children. The team designed toys, a book series, and innovative activities to extend learning into real world contexts such as playgrounds and museums. Helping children to become curious, collaborative, scientific thinkers and doers will prepare them well for academic and career success. This study is funded by the National Science Foundation.

## OUR VALUES



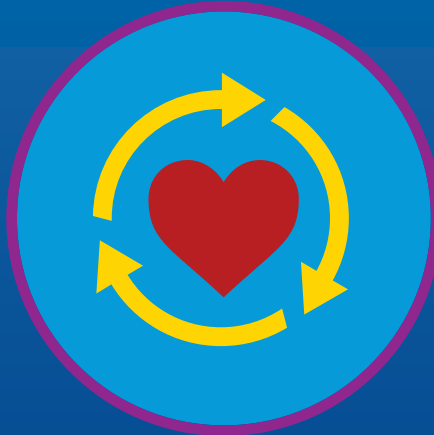
### IMPACT

We forge new avenues to promote flourishing and prevent suffering.



### COLLABORATION

We unite people with diverse perspectives to create sustainable solutions.



### COMPASSION

We care for each other as we promote the well-being of all people.



### CURIOSITY

We question the status quo and innovate to solve problems, while addressing the complexities of individuals, families and communities.



### INTEGRITY

We serve our stakeholders with courage, honesty and scientific rigor.

## CONNECT WITH US



[prevention.psu.edu](http://prevention.psu.edu)



[prevention@psu.edu](mailto:prevention@psu.edu)



Subscribe to our Newsletter: [prevention.psu.edu](http://prevention.psu.edu)

@PRCPennState



**This publication is available in alternative media on request.** Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. U.Ed. HHD 20-025 MPC 155319