

**For Immediate Release
November 19, 2019**

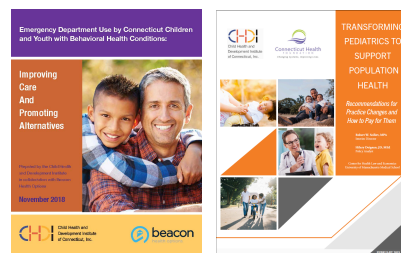
Four Grants Awarded to Advance Innovations in Children's Health & Mental Health

Two Funded Projects Explore Population Health Strategies in Pediatrics and

Two Focus on Reducing Unnecessary Use of Emergency Departments for Behavioral Health Needs

Farmington –The Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) awarded \$125,000 in grants to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary use of emergency departments by youth with behavioral health needs and explore the role of pediatric primary care in promoting population health. The grants are funded by the Children's Fund of Connecticut and the Connecticut Health Foundation and administered by CHDI. The four initiatives were selected after participating in two competitive request for proposals (RFP) application processes administered by CHDI. The RFPs were intended to advance recommendations from two recent reports:

- [*Emergency Department Use by Connecticut Children and Youth with Behavioral Health Conditions: Improving Care and Promoting Alternatives*](#)
- [*Transforming Pediatrics to Support Population Health: Recommendations for Practice Changes and How to Pay for Them*](#)



“The initiatives selected for funding demonstrate a new way of thinking about health care and mental health care payment and delivery that works better for children and their families,” said Jeffrey Vanderploeg, President and CEO of CHDI and the Children's Fund of Connecticut, a public charitable foundation. “They tackle two areas of concern in children's health – high rates of emergency department use by children with behavioral health needs and a fee-for-service payment system that limits many services that pediatricians know help keep children healthy. The projects we are funding put recommendations into action, thus getting us a step closer to solving persistent problems in how we deliver and finance care.”

Reducing and Improving Emergency Department Use by Children with Behavioral Health Concerns

Rates of hospital emergency department use among youth with behavioral health conditions is on the rise nationally and in Connecticut, including a 20% increase from 2014 to 2016 among youth enrolled in Medicaid in Connecticut. CHDI awarded funding to two hospitals to test innovative, scalable, collaborative, and evidence-informed strategies for improving emergency departments' response to youth with behavioral health conditions. Funding for the following grants was provided by the Children's Fund of Connecticut:

- **Connecticut Children's Medical Center Foundation: \$25,000**
Under the direction of Steven Rogers, MD, MS and Ryan O'Donnell, MSN, RN, NEA-BC this project will develop and pilot test a novel behavioral health (BH) acuity assessment tool in the pediatric emergency department. The development of the BH acuity assessment tool will include an

interprofessional approach to ensure feasibility and will use the quality improvement model of rapid cycle improvements to ensure timely development. Results will be shared through professional publications and leveraged to obtain additional funding for a multicenter effectiveness and reliability study.

- **Yale New Haven Hospital: \$24,995**

Under the direction of Beth Emerson, MD and Erika Setzer, MSN, “Reducing Avoidable Pediatric Psychiatric Emergency Department Use (RAPPED UP)” will investigate and create more efficient ED care pathways for children with behavioral health issues. They will develop and refine data-driven tools to inform patient flow and outcomes, as well as improve referral materials for community providers and caregivers. The goal is to support appropriate utilization of community-based behavioral health resources by the pediatric population.

Population Health Strategies in Pediatric Primary Care

Pediatricians are well positioned to promote health and development among children, but often can only provide services that are paid for by health insurance. Health reform efforts are shifting to support providers in expanding the scope of their care to encompass a broader range of services that can contribute to lifelong health and well-being. CHDI awarded funding for two pediatric primary care projects designed to inform future movement to bundled, value-based payment. The projects explore the feasibility of delivering services in pediatric primary care that could support health promotion and population health and are not currently paid for by Medicaid or commercial insurance. Funding for these grants includes \$50,000 from the Children’s Fund (CHDI’s parent organization) and \$25,000 from the Connecticut Health Foundation. The two funded projects include:

- **Establishing Circle of Security Groups in Pediatric Offices, Rocky Hill Pediatrics, LLC: \$37,500**

Under the direction of Kathryn Litwin, M.D., this project will examine the feasibility of supporting pediatric primary care sites in Rocky Hill, Hartford, Manchester, Waterbury and Enfield in implementing Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P), an evidence-based model of promoting socio-emotional competence among children and caretakers.

- **Words and More! Southwest Community Health Center, Inc: \$37,500**

Under the direction of Dara Richards, M.D., Words and More! will coordinate and expand a variety of early literacy programs in Bridgeport that have been shown to contribute to school readiness and social competency. The community health center will establish connections among literacy programs in the community and pediatric primary care sites, encouraging parent engagement in reading to their children.

Learn more at www.chdi.org and www.childrensfundofct.org or contact Julie Tacinelli at tacinelli@uchc.edu or 860-679-1524.