

2023 MCH Conference Abstract Presenters



Nalani Thomas, MS

Addressing Perinatal Mental Health with a Diverse Workforce in Arizona: A Policy Brief

Arizona State University

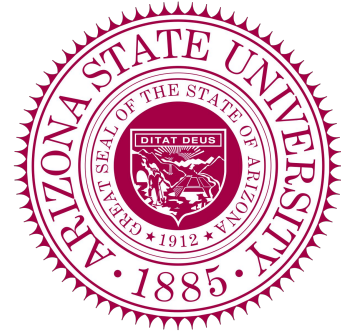
Nalani Thomas has experience conducting and analyzing research through her status as a Population Health PhD student and as part of her prior work in community health and clinical research. She has a B.S. degree in Public Health with an emphasis in Health Deliveries and an M.S. in the Science of Health Care Delivery. Nalani is also an active member of the [Maternal Child Health Translational Research Team](#) (MCHTRT) at ASU.

Elisabeth Williams, MPH

Staff Perceptions of Transitioning to TeleHealth for Home Visitation Program

Arizona State University

As a doctoral student, Elisabeth Williams has experience conducting and analyzing research through both her current status as a PhD student and as part of her prior work. Elisabeth has a wide range of expertise in early childhood and maternal and child health, both in the academic and community organization settings. Elisabeth has a B.A. degree in International Relations and an M.P.H. in International Maternal and Child Health.



Kiara Lyons, PhD

Prevalence and Measurement of ACEs among Children and Adolescents

Arizona State University

Kiara Lyons, Ph.D., is a Presidential Postdoctoral Scholar at Arizona State University's College of Health Solutions. She joined their [Maternal and Child Health Translational Research Team](#) (MCHTRT) at the start of 2023. Dr. Lyons's research interest focuses on mental and behavioral health among youth and adolescents, with a specific interest on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Her passion includes going back to the foundation of epidemiological research and re-evaluating surveillance and methodological efforts in examining mental health among children and adolescents. An important long-term goal of Dr. Lyons is to help improve the relationships between public health practice, research, and communities in efforts to appropriately bridge gaps in healthcare and address the mental health needs of children and adolescents.

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Bree Van Dyke, LCSW
Embracing our Scars: Self-harm 101
UCLA Health

Bree Van Dyke is a Clinical Social Worker at UCLA Santa Monica Hospital in the inpatient pediatrics unit. She graduated with her MSW from USC with a specialization in Children, Youth, and Families. She has provided multiple LGBTQ+ identity trainings to administration in the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Children and Family Services, and probation. She interned at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, in the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine - Center for Transyouth Health and Development where she provided short term therapy to trans youth. She recently transitioned out of outpatient community mental health where she focused on providing therapy to LGBTQ+ youth and trained staff in LGBTQ+ competencies. She has provided various LGBTQ+ trainings to doctors, nurses, and other social workers at UCLA, as well as implemented more visibility on the pediatrics unit. She looks forward to opening a private practice where she plans to work with LGBTQ+ youth.

Micaela Mercado, PhD
Address mental health disparities in Latino families using CBPR
Arizona State University and Valleywise

Dr. Micaela Mercado examines how structural stigma toward mental health perpetuates health disparities among underserved communities of color, specifically Latino/a adults. Her work also involves using implementation science frameworks to examine the adoption or adaptation of - evidence-based practices, best practices, approaches, or strategies - that reduce health disparities and address social determinants of health. Dr. Mercado received her M.S.W from Washington University in St. Louis, and graduated with her doctoral degree in Social Work from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Dr. Mercado is a Research Assistant Professor at Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) and the School of Social Work at ASU.



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Megan Witsoe, BS

Association Between Prenatal Ozone Exposure and Birthweight in Arizona

Creighton University School of Medicine

Megan Witsoe is from Scottsdale, Arizona. She went to the University of Arizona where and majored in Physiology with a minor in Maternal and Infant Development. One of her favorite experiences in undergrad was working on a twin research study in England and learning about the differences in healthcare systems. Megan is now completing her medical degree at Creighton University in Phoenix, Arizona.

Nancy Jackson, MA

From Womb to World: The Effects of EDCs on Fetal and Childhood Development

Arizona State University

Nancy Jackson is a dynamic award-winning change agent with a proven track record in synthesizing complex statistical data and empirical research to educate and engage diverse audiences. She specializes in developing and implementing strategic initiatives that target behavioral modifications to improve outcomes with measurable results. Nancy holds a wide breadth of higher education credentials in the behavioral sciences and transformative leadership, with expertise in lifestyle wellness, performance excellence, data science, and public policy.



Florence Awde, BA

Parental Beliefs and Attitudes around Childhood Cancer in Phoenix Arizona State University

Born and raised in Toronto, Ontario I completed my undergraduate studies at university north of the border. A first-year graduate student in the School of Transborder studies, I am interested in studying health inequities in access and quality across border communities, specifically for children. I am pursuing a MSPH/MPH in the fall at Columbia or Johns Hopkins University and hope to expand my knowledge on issues in our community to propose possible solutions for expanding access and equitable care for vulnerable populations.



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Allison Hays, BS,BS

B.E.A.R Lab

Arizona State University

Allison is a first-year Neuroscience Ph.D. student in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program for Neuroscience at Arizona State University. After moving from Chicago, she graduated in 2022 from ASU with bachelor's degrees in Neuroscience and Psychological Sciences. Her research broadly explores how epigenetic mechanisms influence cognition, and how one's experiences are associated with epigenetic changes. Currently, she is investigating the association between psychedelic use and different cognitive and behavioral outcomes. She is also interested in executive functioning, substance use, the gut microbiome, and stress.



Adam Thompson, MS

Farm to school programs in low-income, high minority K-12 schools

University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson

Adam Thompson, M.S is a first year medical student at the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson passionate about adolescent health policy, advocacy, and preventative medicine. I have previous local, state, and federal policy research experience including working for a local Maricopa County Board of Supervisors candidate as a health policy researcher and completing research on the implications of federal farm to school policies on childhood obesity while completing my Master's in Healthcare Delivery and Policy. I am continuing my impact as a medical student as Lead Coordinator of my medical school's clinic for underserved and underinsured LGBTQ+ adults and youth, President/National Delegate for my medical school's American Medical Association chapter focusing on adolescent substance use disorder policy, Co-Founder and Policy Chair of our Advocacy & Policy Club, and President of the Pediatrics Interest Group.

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Samantha Harker, BA, BA

**APOE E4 predicts accelerated cognitive and brain aging outcomes
in older adults with autism**

Arizona State University

Samantha Harker is a neurodivergent researcher dedicated to researching autism and advocating for individuals on the neurodiverse spectrum. She attended Arizona State University and the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy to earn BAs in English and Medical Humanities. Her background in creative writing inspired her to pursue advocacy authorship for neurodivergent researchers studying cognitive differences. She aims to improve the understanding of female adults with autism by amplifying participatory research, increasing female participants in research samples, and reinvigorating resources and care for autistic adults. Originally from Anaheim, California, she is pursuing her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at Arizona State University.

