

For Immediate Release
April 12, 2023

New Grant Awarded to University of Washington Researchers Will Launch Neighborhood-Based Youth Mental Health Planning in Pierce County

Interest in developing more comprehensive solutions to support youth mental health led faculty in the University of Washington departments of [Psychiatry](#), [Sociology](#) and [Urban Studies](#) to partner with multiple community and government organizations in the Parkland area of Pierce County.

A grant from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's System for Action](#) research program will support a [research team to evaluate the early implementation of Youth Wellness Hubs](#). A Youth Wellness Hub is a resource that assists community members who live in adjoining neighborhoods, about the size of a high school catchment area, to assess, plan and implement the youth mental health support needed for that specific community. The Hub will provide planning, funding and communication resources for community and local youth-serving organizations to come together to create a Parkland vision for youth mental health and wellness.

Department of Psychiatry Associate Professor [Sarah Cusworth Walker, Ph.D.](#), is leading the project alongside [Safe Streets](#), a community nonprofit with decades of experience mobilizing residents to advocate for local services and policy improvements. The former co-founder of Safe Streets, [Priscilla Lisicich, Ph.D.](#), is a consultant for the effort. The project is supported by multiple community leaders in Pierce County, including the [Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#), [Franklin-Pierce School District](#), [Pierce County Councilmembers](#), [Pierce County Juvenile Court](#), [Molina Healthcare](#), [MultiCare](#) and local business and community leaders.

"Our goal is to work closely with Parkland to learn about the level of onboarding support needed to learn how to best stand up Youth Wellness Hubs so this approach can be a sustainable resource for local community mental health decision-making," said Dr. Walker, who directs [UW CoLab for Community and Behavioral Health Policy](#). "Safe Streets and our team have a common interest in building infrastructure for community-led health planning. This approach will give community members a powerful platform for directing the resources to meet local family and youth needs."

In our current landscape of youth mental health care, funding for services flows through many different sources and are often not well-coordinated. This results in parents and teens feeling lost and overwhelmed when trying to find mental health support. In addition, many activities and resources outside of seeing a therapist increase positive youth mental health, including feeling connected, having meaningful activities and having safe places to spend time outdoors and with friends. It is difficult for a single system like a health care organization or school to oversee all these resources. An effort to look at the whole landscape of youth mental health support, from whether youth have enough options for afterschool activities to where families can access crisis care, is the task of the Youth Wellness Hub.

While the core functions of the Youth Wellness Hub have all been tested and found effective in other locations, the Parkland pilot will be unique in its combination of two activities: collaborative planning across youth-serving organizations and supporting a community member board to oversee efforts. Other investigators on the study include [Tyler McCormick, Ph.D.](#), and [Jerald Herting, Ph.D.](#), from the UW Department of Sociology; [Matthew Kelley, Ph.D.](#), from the School of Urban Studies; [Pamela Collins, M.D., M.P.H.](#), from [Johns Hopkins Department of Mental Health](#); and [Anna Tresidder, Ph.D.](#), from [Excelsior Health and Wellness](#).

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About Systems for Action

[Systems for Action](#) is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that aims to discover and apply new evidence about ways of aligning the delivery and financing systems that support a Culture of Health.

About CoLab for Community & Behavioral Health Policy

[CoLab for Community & Behavioral Health Policy](#) is a center located within the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine. CoLab reimagines how evidence can be integrated with community expertise to advance behavioral health policy.

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