

# UNH Receives \$4.8 Million to Support Mental Health in People with Intellectual Disabilities

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## MEDIA RELATIONS

DURHAM, N.H.— A new funding award for the University of New Hampshire’s Institute on Disability (IOD) aims to improve mental health outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who can have limited cognitive functioning and skills, such as communication, social and self-care skills. The \$4.86 million award, from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), will fund a study to evaluate telehealth as a method of delivering preventive mental health treatments.

“We are excited about the opportunity to bring over 30 years of experience to study and improve access to systems of mental health care for youth and young adults with IDD in the community,” said Joan Beasley, research associate professor and director of the Center for START Services at the IOD, a national model of crisis prevention and intervention services for people with IDD.

Individuals with IDD are twice as likely to have mental health needs compared to the national average and are also far less likely to have access to quality preventive mental health treatments. As a result, many patients and families turn to costly, ineffective and often traumatic emergency services resulting in poor outcomes. Recently, telehealth services, which are provided through the internet and/or phone, have become a more common yet unproven strategy for delivering mental health care to individuals with IDD. The project will compare an in-person to a telehealth-delivered crisis prevention program for youth and young adults with IDD. Both

interventions will be delivered by research teams from the Center for START at the IOD, the University of Florida and Johns Hopkins Kennedy Krieger Institute. The project will engage patient partners and stakeholders throughout the design, methods and implementation.

“This study was selected for funding not only for its scientific merit and commitment to engaging patients and stakeholders in research, but also for its potential to fill an important evidence gap and give people information to help them better assess their care options,” said PCORI Executive Director Nakela Cook. “We look forward to following the study’s progress and working with the Institute on Disability to share the results.”

IOD’s study was selected for funding through a highly competitive review process in which patients, clinicians, and other stakeholders joined clinical scientists to evaluate the proposals. Applications were assessed for scientific merit, how well they will engage patients and other stakeholders, and their methodological rigor, among other criteria.

PCORI is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010. Its mission is to fund research that will provide patients, their caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence-based information needed to make better-informed healthcare decisions. For more information about PCORI’s funding, visit [pcori.org](https://www.pcori.org).

The Institute on Disability (IOD) at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. The Center for START Services at the IOD is a national initiative that works to strengthen efficiencies and service outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health needs in the community. To learn more, visit [centerforstartservices.org](https://www.centerforstartservices.org).

The [University of New Hampshire](https://www.unh.edu) inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation, and world. More than 16,000 students from all 50 states and 71 countries engage with an award-winning faculty in top-ranked programs in business, engineering, law, health and human services, liberal arts and the sciences across more than 200 programs of study. As one of the nation’s highest-performing research universities, UNH partners with NASA, NOAA, NSF and NIH, and receives more than \$110 million in competitive external funding every year to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

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