

## New suicide prevention research center

*MSU, Henry Ford Health, Brown University to establish new center with \$15M NIH grant*

With about one death by suicide reported every 11 minutes in the United States and an increased risk of suicide in individuals involved in the justice system, Michigan State University, Henry Ford Health and Brown University have established the National Center for Health and Justice Integration for Suicide Prevention.

The new suicide prevention research center, also known as NCHATS, is an innovative program funded by a \$15 million grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health. The goal is to build information bridges between health care organizations and justice systems to identify individuals at risk for suicide and connect them to care.

The center will examine how to scale successful pilot projects and evaluate both the clinical and cost-effectiveness of suicide prevention activities, said **LAUREN WEINSTOCK**, professor of psychiatry and human behavior at Brown University and the third principal investigator on the grant.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and social justice movements of the past several years have brought significant attention to the multitude of inequities faced within the U.S., and particularly how these have contributed to disparities in those who come into contact with the criminal justice system,” Weinstock said. “Amidst calls for decarceration and diversion to mental health and substance use treatment, we need systems in place to effectively identify those who are at greatest risk and connect them to services. With the establishment of NCHATS, we aim to address the all-too-frequent problem in which vulnerable individuals find themselves ‘falling through the cracks’ between the health and justice systems and to connect people to needed care.”

“One of the main problems in suicide prevention is finding people at risk for

suicide who are not well connected to health care,” said **JENNIFER JOHNSON**, a principal investigator on the grant and C. S. Mott Endowed Professor of Public Health at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. “It turns out that many such individuals are in contact with the justice system, including police, courts and local jails. The challenge with connecting individuals in jail with community services is that it is resource-intensive and difficult to do at scale. Our approach solves both problems.”

“These teams bring together the country’s foremost experts to reduce the national suicide rate while establishing interdisciplinary approaches to connect hard-to-reach individuals to care,” said **ARON SOUSA**, dean of the MSU College of Human Medicine. “Public health efforts to identify gaps in care for vulnerable populations are critical to the health of our nation. Together, we can make a lasting difference.”

**BRIAN AHMEDANI**, a principal investigator and director of the Center for Health Policy and Health Services Research and Psychiatric Research at Henry Ford Health, said he and his team are eager to incorporate Henry Ford’s internationally acclaimed suicide research and Zero Suicide prevention program.

“We know that sharing information between institutions is critical to saving the lives of these individuals. This research could also become knowledge that could be applied to the general population, leading to even more lives saved by preventing suicides,” he said.

Justice-involved individuals also have high rates of other suicide risk factors, including mental health problems, substance use, financial challenges, loss of housing, relationship struggles, exposure to violence, and access to lethal means such as firearms, vehicles, or drugs.

The justice system and police settings have limited mental health intervention capacity, and health systems are typically unaware of their patients’ justice involvement.

NCHATS includes more than 100 stakeholders, 30 investigators and 15 institutions. The center will use contact with the justice system (e.g., police contact, court involvement, arrest) as a novel indicator of suicide risk in the general population. The center will link big data systems that efficiently track publicly available data on justice involvement to health system records to identify individuals at risk for suicide and connect them to community care.

Even with the known risks, suicide prevention is not the top priority of most police and justice contacts. By bringing together jails, police, health systems/plans, judges and corrections, NCHATS will integrate and expand the public health response to suicide prevention.

The award includes funds for 15 institutions, including:

- Addiction Policy Forum
- Brown University
- Butler Hospital
- CareSource Ohio, Inc.
- Cambridge Health Alliance
- Columbia University
- George Mason University
- HealthPartners Institute
- Henry Ford Health
- Michigan State University
- Mount Auburn Hospital
- Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation
- Wayne State University
- Education Development Center
- University of Pennsylvania

## RIDOH survey results spotlight health, well-being of RI high school students

PROVIDENCE – While Rhode Island high school students report decreases in the use of some substances, mental health challenges persist for many adolescents in the state, according to new results from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

The YRBS is an optional, anonymous survey conducted every two years in randomly selected Rhode Island high schools to provide a snapshot of how many students are engaging in behaviors or face challenges that may put their physical and mental health at risk. The survey also sheds light on student perceptions of their home and school environments. RIDOH uses these data to develop health programs that address the needs and challenges of Rhode Island youth.

RIDOH collaborates on the YRBS with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), and the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH). Students in randomly selected Rhode Island high schools responded to the anonymous survey in the fall of 2021. All respondents were in school full time and were not using remote or hybrid learning.

According to responses collected in 2021:

### Substance use

- 32% of respondents had ever e-vaped (a decrease from 49% in 2019) and 18% reported currently using e-vape products (a decrease from 30% in 2019).
- While alcohol use remained the same as in the 2019 survey, students reported decreases in: Ever smoking cigarettes – Using any type of tobacco product (including cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, or e-cigarettes) in the previous 30 days and Ever using marijuana and using marijuana during the previous 30 days.
- Students who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (27%) or other/questioning (20%) reported higher rates of e-vaping, alcohol, and marijuana use. Rates of e-vaping and other substance use were higher among female students than males. Almost a quarter of 12th grade students who responded to the survey (24%) reported current e-vaping use.

### Mental health

The 2021 survey results indicate that:

- 38% of students experienced feelings of sadness or hopelessness (up from 32% in 2019). But 22% of students reported receiving the help they needed when feeling anxious or depressed, a decrease from 33% in 2019. Fewer students said they had a teacher or adult at school they could talk to if they had a problem. Survey respondents reported less fighting and bullying on school property, but electronic bullying levels remained the same as they did in 2019.
- Feelings of sadness and hopelessness varied across student demographic groups. Females (52%) were twice as likely as males (25%) to report these feelings. Additionally, students who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (66%) and other/questioning (62%) reported higher rates of sadness and hopelessness than students who identified as heterosexual (29%). Students who did not identify as heterosexual or cisgender also reported higher rates of bullying than students who did identify as heterosexual or cisgender.

### Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

The 2021 survey included two new measures related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs):

- One in three students (32%) reported that they have lived with someone who was depressed or suicidal.
- One in four students (24%) reported that they have lived with someone who was having a problem with alcohol or drugs.

### Sexual activity, education

Students who responded to the 2021 YRBS reported a decrease in sexual activity.

- Twenty seven percent of students had ever been sexually active (down from 41% in 2019), while 21% of students said they were currently sexually active (a decrease from 32% in 2019).
- In 2021, fewer students also reported receiving education about sexual health. Of survey respondents, 49% reported being taught about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and 56% reported being taught about HIV (a decrease from 72% and 77% in 2019, respectively).
- Five percent of students reported being tested for STDs, a decrease from 15% in 2019.

Link to report: <https://health.ri.gov/data/adolescenthealth/>

## JWU launches accelerated second degree nursing program

*First cohort of four-semester Bachelor of Science program to begin in fall 2023*

PROVIDENCE – Johnson & Wales University will launch an accelerated second degree Bachelor's of Science in Nursing program after receiving approval from the Rhode Island Board of Nursing Registration & Nursing Education.

“Rhode Island, like the rest of the country, is experiencing a critical shortage of nursing professionals,” said **SANDRA G. AFFENITO, PhD**, vice chancellor of academic administration. “Between the COVID-19 pandemic and retirements, our health care system has been pushed to its limit. We are proud to offer this program to make nursing more accessible to those interested in a career change.”

The accelerated, four-semester program is intended to be a secondary degree program for students who already completed an undergraduate program with a GPA of 3.0 or higher. To be considered for the highly competitive program, students will have to have completed required prerequisite courses including human anatomy and physiology and chemistry. Otherwise qualified students who do not meet these requirements will have the opportunity to complete the needed classes with a grade of B– or higher at JWU before beginning the nursing program.

Once fully accepted into the program, students will be required to complete in-class instruction, as well as faculty supervised clinical hours through agreements with health care providers across the state.

“Our graduates will be ready to hit the ground running on day one of their career, with real-world experience already under their belt,” said **SUZAN MENIHAN, DNP, CNM**, JWU's chief nursing officer and director of the nursing program. “The accelerated timeline will allow us to help meet the needs of Rhode Island's changing health care landscape.”

As is the case in all health and wellness degree programs offered at JWU, nursing students will be required to complete nutrition coursework, leveraging the university's culinary strength and history to provide a full-body approach to wellness.

The proposed program was approved by the Rhode Island Board of Nursing Registration & Nursing Education in September.

The new degree program further solidifies Johnson & Wales strong commitment to health care education. In 2014, the university became the first in the state to offer a Physician Assistant Studies Master's Degree program, and in May graduated the first class of the pioneering entry-level Occupational Therapy Doctorate program, also the first of its kind in the state. Both programs were awarded accreditation, proving their quality in in health and wellness education. The university's decades of hospitality and culinary excellence provide the foundation for JWU's patient-centered, empathetic, and holistic approach to health care education.

JWU anticipates welcoming the first class of students in fall 2023, with the first graduates concluding their studies by December 2024. ❖

## Nonprofits can apply for \$20M in grants to address housing, hunger and behavioral health

PROVIDENCE – Governor **DAN MCKEE**, Lt. Governor **SABINA MATOS**, House Speaker **K. JOSEPH SHEKARCHI**, Senate President **DOMINICK J. RUGGERIO** and the Rhode Island Foundation recently announced a new \$20 million grant program for nonprofits working on food insecurity, housing instability and homelessness prevention, and the behavioral health needs of Rhode Islanders.

The Rhode Island ARPA Support Grants Program targets organizations that experienced negative economic impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program was created in the Governor's FY 2023 budget using funding from the state's \$1.1 billion share of the federal American Rescue Plan Act allocation.

The Foundation is accepting applications on a rolling basis until the funding is gone. Grants are expected to range from \$50,000 to \$150,000. This is the single largest grant program in the Foundation's 106-year history.

“We will begin immediately to get this funding into the hands of the organizations that are doing the boots-on-the-ground work. We appreciate state leaders having confidence in our ability to provide this funding as these grants will give nonprofits across Rhode Island the resources to help their communities recover from COVID-19's continuing impact on their daily lives,” said **NEIL D. STEINBERG**, the Foundation's President and CEO.

The Foundation will give priority to community-based nonprofits that are located in federally designated low-income neighborhoods.

Applicants must have a federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) and must submit a copy of their most recent IRS Form 990, 990EZ or 990N; and their 501(c)(3) IRS determination letter with their application if it is not already on file at the Foundation.

The Foundation plans to schedule an information session for nonprofits that are interested in applying. For more information about applying for a grant or registering for the info session, visit [rifoundation.org](http://rifoundation.org). ❖

## Gov. McKee, Congressional delegation kick off construction of new state health lab, major life sciences development

PROVIDENCE – On October 24th Gov. **DAN MCKEE** was joined by Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation, legislative leaders, Brown University leaders and healthcare professionals, and development partner Ancora L&G, to break ground on a 212,000 square foot, 7-story building that will house the State's new health lab, life sciences labs for Brown University, and additional bio-technology space in the state's Innovation and Design District on the former I-195 land.

"Rhode Island has momentum – and this project is crucial to ensuring the momentum continues in the areas of public health and our life sciences economy," said Gov. McKee. "We're grateful for the partners who came together to ensure Rhode Island maximizes this significant economic development opportunity while advancing the state's important public health goals."

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) State Health Laboratories will anchor the facility, with the remaining floors available to academic and industry partners in the biotechnology field. The 80,000-square-foot state-of-the-art State Health Laboratories will provide updated and flexible space to accommodate biological and chemical testing for a variety of infectious disease, environmental, and forensic testing services.

To help attract additional tenants and encourage a thriving mix of public and private entities focused on health and medicine, Brown University has signed a letter of intent with Ancora to lease 20,000 square feet of laboratory space in the building.

**JOSH PARKER**, CEO of Ancora L&G, said, "We are delighted to have been selected as the developer for the



A groundbreaking ceremony was held Oct. 24th for the State's new health lab, a seven-story building funded in part by an \$81.7M CDC grant. It will also house life sciences' labs for Brown University, and additional bio-technology space.

RIDOH State Health Laboratories. The development will deliver much-needed infrastructure for Rhode Island, including state-of-the-art public health labs that will enhance the State's ability to test for and manage a broad range of infectious diseases and illnesses, together with private-sector lab space to support expansion of the area's growing bioscience ecosystem. We are excited to be working on this project, demonstrating our ability to deliver against the needs of our anchor institution partners."

This public/private partnership follows a condominium model with ownership of the State Health Laboratories unit conveyed to the State of Rhode Island on completion, and Ancora L&G retaining ownership of the private laboratory space. Funding for the \$81.7 million state laboratory comes from an Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The total project cost is expected to be \$165 million.

U.S. Senators **JACK REED** and **SHELDON WHITEHOUSE** and Congressmen **JIM LANGEVIN** and **DAVID CICILLINE** helped secure federal funding for the state health lab in the American

Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2) and \$81.7 million of this funding was directed to Rhode Island under the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant program, which is administered by the CDC. The total project cost is expected to be \$165 million.

Building on its long-standing commitment to supporting Jewelry District projects that contribute to the economic vitality of the city and the state, Brown University has signed a letter of intent with Ancora Partners to lease 20,000 square feet of laboratory space in the building for a period of 10 years.

With 50,000 square feet of direct usable space, the new lab will offer a larger, more modern and technologically advanced workspace than the current state health lab located at 50 Orms Street. Like the Orms Street location, the new lab will include a Biosafety Level 3 facility and will be able to provide critical services for a variety of infectious disease, environmental, and forensic testing needs. The updated space will allow the State Health Laboratory to be more flexible in response to emerging threats and applying new technologies including the expanding field of genome sequencing. ❖

## Women & Infants to create new labor, delivery center with \$5M from Brown

PROVIDENCE – With a \$5 million gift from Brown University to support the project, Care New England plans to build a new, technologically advanced labor and delivery center at Women & Infants Hospital that will serve families from Rhode Island and the surrounding region.

In recognition of the gift, CNE will name its state-of-the-art facility the Brown University Labor and Delivery Center when it is completed. It will be designed to meet the specific needs of birthing families and their dedicated medical providers.

**SHANNON SULLIVAN**, president and COO of Women & Infants Hospital, said that “the new birth center will provide a comfortable and welcoming space that will offer access to high-quality obstetrics for all patients. Rooms will be designed to better accommodate the range of child delivery experiences desired by patients, including meeting the requirements of patient medical conditions. Rooms will be 400 square feet in size, an increase from the current 220-square-foot rooms at Women & Infants, which will not only increase comfort for patients but better accommodate extended family, birth partners and doulas.”

Labor and delivery center rooms will include private baths as well as externally facing windows that permit natural light. In addition, an expanded centralized workspace for physicians and care providers will advance clinical collaboration.

**DR. MUKESH JAIN**, dean of medicine and biological sciences at the Warren Alpert Medical School, noted that emerging data show a clear link between the health care environment and safe clinical outcomes. For example, labor and delivery units that are designed to facilitate natural childbirth, as those in the new center will be, have lower rates of cesarean delivery and better birth outcomes.

“Women & Infants Hospital is creating an exceptional environment that will advance even further its clinical excellence, and we’re proud to partner

with Care New England in caring for the women, children and families of southern New England,” said Dr. Jain, who oversees the medical school’s relationships with affiliated hospitals. “Women & Infants is an integral training site for our medical students, and learning in a facility designed to improve outcomes will impart important lessons in providing patient-centered care.”

CNE expects to begin construction on the Brown University Labor and Delivery Center in early 2023. ❖



Architectural rendering of the new center.

**DR. JAMES E. FANALE**, president and CEO of Care New England, said that “four out of five families from Rhode Island give birth at Women & Infants, which is the leading innovator in the fields of normal and high-risk obstetrics and neonatology. While the hospital’s existing labor and delivery suite has served patients well for more than 35 years, evolving medical protocols, technologies and patient expectations necessitate an update.”

## Gov. McKee announces new license for Rhode Island State Psychiatric Hospital

*New license will position the State to seek up to \$40M federal reimbursements for patient care per year*

PROVIDENCE – Fulfilling plans announced one year ago, **GOV. DAN MCKEE** and **RICHARD CHAREST**, Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), gathered Oct. 25th on Howard Avenue in Cranston to announce the licensing of a new state psychiatric hospital. Securing the new license will improve patient care and better position

“One year ago, we committed to opening a standalone psychiatric hospital as part of our long-term vision for improving our state hospital system, and today we are making good on that commitment,” said Gov. McKee. “This is good news for the patients who need the specialized care that is provided here, and it is good news for our state, because it provides access to available federal dollars that help

day-to-day operations at Benton will not change, this allows the treatment and care that we provide at Benton to be subject to standards that are more appropriate for psychiatric hospitals, and that will help our staff as they care for our patients.”

“Eleanor Slater Hospital is an essential part of the Rhode Island health system. The separation of the Benton Facility to a standalone psychiatric hospital is an important step in the reorganization of the state hospital that will provide access to critical funds necessary to support quality and safety for both patients and hospital employees,” said **M. TERESA PAIVA WEED**, President, Hospital Association of Rhode Island.

Operating as a standalone hospital, the Benton facility will continue to treat psychiatric patients, including those who have severe and persistent mental illness and are incompetent to stand trial, those who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity and deemed too dangerous for current release, and those who are serving prison sentences and require specialized treatment not available at the Adult Correctional Institutions.

Licensing the new hospital is one piece of a long-term plan to invest in Rhode Island’s state hospital system. The state budget adopted this year initiates several long-term capital investments, including a new facility on the Zambarano Campus in Burrillville, renovations at the Regan building on the Pastore Campus and the procurement of an electronic medical records system.

At the same time, Eleanor Slater Hospital and BHDDH, with help from the Governor’s Office, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, resolved dozens of concerns raised by CMS, The Joint Commission and the State Fire Marshal. The licensing of the new hospital is the latest of these accomplishments. ❖



the State to seek federal reimbursements that help pay for patient care.

The Rhode Island State Psychiatric Hospital (RISPH), located in the Roosevelt Benton facility, will continue the mission that the Benton facility had as part of Eleanor Slater Hospital – to treat psychiatric and court-ordered forensic patients who have serious mental illnesses.

With the RISPH operating as a standalone hospital, the state will be better positioned to care for psychiatric patients. In addition, the state will be better positioned to seek federal matches that help support patient care within Eleanor Slater Hospital. Based on current patient trends, those additional matches are projected to be, on average, about \$30 million to \$40 million a year.

support the care of our patients.”

“Licensure of the Benton facility as a standalone hospital marks a critical step in our work to transform Rhode Island’s behavioral health continuum of care by preserving and improving access to quality, cost effective healthcare,” said Executive Office of Health & Human Services Acting Secretary **ANA NOVAIS**.

“This is an important day for Rhode Island and for our state’s healthcare system, and it is made possible by the hard work of many dedicated employees, as well as the support of state lawmakers, state health officials, and other state agencies, and we thank all of them for helping to make this new hospital a reality,” said BHDDH Director Charest. “While the