



**USF's Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science
and Practice**

College of Public Health, University of South Florida

Tampa, Florida, USA

2024 ATMCH Innovative Teaching Award Final Report

Project:

**Harnessing Knowledge Translation to Bridge the Research and Practice
Divide in MCH: An Innovative Short-Term Training**

Authors:

Vickie Dugat, PhD, MPH, Postdoctoral Fellow

Abraham Salinas, MD, PhD, MPH, Associate Director

Cheryl Vamos, PhD, MPH, Director

Harnessing Knowledge Translation to Bridge the Research and Practice Divide in MCH: An Innovative Short-Term Training

Background of the Project

MCH research has made significant strides contributing to evidence-based interventions, programs and policies that have positively impacted the well-being of mothers, children, and communities. However, the dissemination, translation, and integration of this research into effective practice remains a critical challenge. This knowledge translation (KT) gap has received wide attention given that it takes an average of 17 years for research to be used in practice (Trochim, 2010). This project developed an innovative training on KT that can be integrated into a diverse array of MCH educational offerings.

Significance of the Project to Teaching MCH

Knowledge translation (KT) is defined as “a dynamic and iterative process that includes the synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically sound application of knowledge to improve health, provide more effective health services and products, and strengthen the health care system” (Straus, Tetroe, & Graham, 2009). KT is globally recognized as an area of expertise with distinct models, frameworks, stakeholders, principles, and mechanisms (Grimshaw et al., 2012). KT in the context of MCH involves bridging the gap between research findings and practical application, ensuring that the knowledge generated through scientific discoveries translates into tangible and practical improvements in health outcomes for mothers, babies, and families.

Factors that contribute to the complexity of this translation process include varying cultural contexts, lack of community understanding, the evolving nature of scientific information, and other system-level barriers (e.g., political constraints; organizational practices; staff awareness, skill, and motivation) to knowledge use and integration. Given such challenges, there is an increasing need to emphasize the importance of KT strategies that facilitate the integration of MCH research into practice. Additionally, KT fosters collaboration between researchers, students, healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and communities, creating a dynamic exchange of information that enhances the relevance and applicability of research in diverse contexts. By facilitating the integration of research findings into practice, KT can enhance access to care and services, reduce health disparities, and contribute to the achievement of health equity.

Gap in Teaching MCH that the Project Addresses

Current graduate-level training in MCH is grounded in the national MCH Leadership Competencies and MPH foundational competencies (CEPH), and spans critical areas such as MCH knowledge base, program planning, research and evaluation, policy, leadership, ethics, communication, interdisciplinary practice, and systems approaches. However, a significant gap exists that links knowledge creation with application. For instance, considerable training is provided to research-oriented activities (e.g., program planning, research designs/methods) and

to practice-oriented activities (e.g., leadership, program implementation, conflict management) but these trainings are typically disconnected where their respective processes, stakeholders and outcomes are not interlinked. Specifically, there is a need for enhanced processes that facilitate the seamless translation of cutting-edge research findings into actionable policies and programs, ensuring a more direct and impactful contribution to the field of MCH. Bridging this gap requires innovative approaches and collaborative efforts to foster a sustainable relationship between academia, public health practitioners, policymakers, and community stakeholders, that ultimately advance the delivery and effectiveness of MCH services and resources.

Description of Innovative Project

The [USF's Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health \(MCH\) Education, Science, and Practice](#), funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), aims to “provide didactic and experiential public health training in MCH that leads to masters and doctoral graduate degrees and which advances MCH workforce capacity.” Our *mission* is to produce an MCH workforce who will be change-ready leaders equipped with the necessary tools to address contemporary emerging MCH issues, promote healthier children, families, and communities, and address persistent disparities in MCH and healthcare across all systems. The Center of Excellence implements the MCH concentration curriculum at the College of Public Health, University of South Florida, through core MCH courses, MCH electives, special topic courses, as well as additional workshops.

Analyses of our training needs assessments for our MCH students revealed a need to strengthen competencies related to policy and translation of evidence into practice. Therefore, we developed this short-term training to foster didactic instruction and experiential opportunities as it applied to KT in the field of MCH. MCH Leadership Competencies were embedded within each module of this short-term training, including: 1. the use of research methods, 2. describing the scope and impact of MCH problems, 3. describing MCH policy development, programs, laws, regulations, advocacy movements, and current legislative mandates, 4. summarizing, writing, and translating scientific data and policies, 5. communicating effectively, and 6. utilizing cultural competence and community partnership development in practice (MCH Navigator, n.d). Learning activities focused on equipping graduate-level students with essential knowledge and skills required for tailoring the evidence for adoption and implementation for use within the local context based on the knowledge-to-action-framework (Straus et al., 2009). Effective KT ensures that evidence-based interventions are not confined to academic journals but are instead disseminated and implemented across various healthcare and community settings. Integrating KT into MCH is crucial to unlock the complete potential of research findings and convert them into substantial enhancements in the health and well-being of mothers and children starting from the classroom.

Program Overview:

This 12-week program was designed for masters and doctoral-level students interested in translating MCH research into practice and policy. The course covered the essential knowledge and skills needed to design, evaluate, and disseminate evidence-based interventions and materials that improve the health outcomes of mothers and children. With a focus on bridging the gap between research and actionable policy, this unique short-term training initiative emphasized knowledge translation and dissemination strategies. *Knowledge Translation (KT)* seeks to narrow the gap between researchers (knowledge producers) and community stakeholders/decision-makers (knowledge users).

The students received direct mentorship from MCH faculty and participated in short-term community-based projects of MCH significance. The students, who were designated as MCH Policy Scholars Summer 2024 as a way to foster their leadership, were required to participate in other supplemental training scheduled by the Center of Excellence in MCH. This included critical appraisal of research evidence as well as introductory training on community advocacy and research dissemination. The students also learned to communicate MCH research findings effectively through formats such as conference presentations, abstracts, infographics, and policy briefs, ensuring the evidence is accessible to stakeholders and informs decision-making and policy creation at local and state levels.

As an integration of their learning, the students participated in two extracurricular activities (funding by the USF Center of Excellence in MCH): **APHA's Summer Policy Institute (virtual attendance) and the Florida Public Health Association Annual Conference (in-person).**

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

1. Recognize and prioritize the integration of research translation strategies to inform policy to enhance MCH outcomes.
2. Synthesize current evidence to inform policy.
3. Understand how quantitative and qualitative data can be used to support policy development.
4. Analyze MCH programs/practices and identify policy windows.
5. Identify barriers and facilitators of translating research into policy.
6. Develop and communicate comprehensive policy plans to diverse stakeholders and target audiences.
7. Identify ethical issues that arise when translating research into policy.
8. Advocate for policies and practices that promote MCH.
9. Apply MCH competencies when creating a policy roadmap.
10. Understand the importance of cultural sensitivity when advocating for policies to achieve equity among MCH populations.

Team

Development Team/Instructors

Vickie Dugat, PhD, MPH. MCH Postdoctoral Fellow. MCH Summer Program Curriculum Developer. *Research Areas:* Maternal and Child Health, Breastfeeding, Stressful life events during pregnancy, and Racial discrimination.

Abraham Salinas-Miranda, MD, PhD, MPH. Research Assistant Professor. Associate Director, Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science and Practice. Director, James and Jennifer Harrell Center for The Study of Family Violence. Fellow, Chiles Center for Women, Children and Families. *Research Areas:* Family Violence, Mixed Methods Research Designs, Structural Equation Modeling.

Cheryl Vamos, PhD, MPH. Professor. Director, Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science and Practice. Fellow, Chiles Center for Women, Children and Families. *Research Areas:* MCH Oral Health, Family Planning, Health Literacy, Implementation Science

Faculty collaborators (guest speakers, mentors, or curriculum consultants):

- Steve Freedman, MAE, PhD, Associate Director, Policy Development
- Ellen M. Daley, PhD, Senior Associate Dean of Research and Practice; Director, Chiles Center.
- Karen Liller, PhD, CPH, FAAAS, FAAHB, Distinguished University Health Professor. Director of the Activist Lab, Strategic Lead for Policy, Practice and Leadership.
- Claudia Parvanta, PhD, Professor and Concentration Lead, Social Marketing. Director, USF Center for Social Marketing. Co-Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Social Marketing.
- Lori Reeves, MPH, Executive Director, Florida Perinatal Quality Collaborative

Administrative Support Staff:

Kristina Hamp, MPH, CPH, CHES, Program Planner Analyst, MCH Summer Program Coordinator.

Meet the Summer 2024 Students “MCH Policy Scholars”

Nicole Harris

PhD Candidate, Community and Family Health

Nicole’s research interests are: exploring how everyday clinic policies and guidelines create the conditions for disrespectful encounters with prenatal care providers, making visible how mistreatment shapes Black women’s experiences of agency, oppression, and power within these spaces, and positioning Black women through their collective wisdom and unique standpoint, as both the architects and beneficiaries of clinic policy changes and transformation. She is also a former Birth Equity Research Scholar at the National Birth Equity Collaborative



Paula Hernandez

MPH Student, Maternal and Child Health & Epidemiology

Paula’s research interests include sexual and reproductive health, chronic conditions, and adverse childhood experiences. She has held different leadership positions and worked with different research projects related to HPV, the maternal and child health student organization, and the black maternal health week of Tampa Bay. In the future, she hopes to work as an OB/GYN to improve access to care and decrease health disparities for minority populations. She also aims to use her platform to be a leader and activist for meaningful reproductive health policy and practice changes.



Mirine Richey

DrPH Student, Advanced Practice Leadership in Public Health

Mirine is committed to advancing supportive policies for pregnancy, including ensuring quality postpartum and lactation care, as well as forward-thinking Medicaid and insurance policy support. She has worked in various settings, from rural programs to a large birthing hospital in Miami. She will leverage her doctoral training to advance efforts in lactation and Title V training and curriculum development and work with Florida Colleges of Medicine to enhance medical student education in lactation practice.



Jacqueline Houston

MSW/MPH Student, Behavioral Health

Jacqueline serves as Legislative Head of USF Social Work Society and is a 2024 Vot-ER Civic Health Fellow. Her professional experience focuses on addressing systemic causes and the psychosocial impact of coercive control. This interest has led Jacqueline to pursue policy advocacy as it relates to child and adult survivors of domestic violence in Florida’s child welfare system and maternal and child mental health broadly. Following her advocacy training at UN Headquarters in Geneva, she is completing her clinical practicum at Tampa’s domestic violence center.



Anna Broich

MPH/MA Student, Medical Anthropology

With an undergraduate degree in anthropology, Anna knew that she wanted to dive into public health during her graduate program. The combination of knowledge and experiences she gained from pursuing concurrent degrees has been invaluable. Anna’s research interests include abortion access, reproductive justice, comprehensive sexual education, and harm reduction. Her thesis will examine anti-abortion centers situated in Tampa Bay. She currently works as a Hepatitis C testing and treatment specialist at the IDEA Exchange.



Alexis Rice

MHA STUDENT

With a strong passion for maternal and child health, Alexis’ purpose within the field is to leverage the tools provided by healthcare administration to make significant advancements in the MCH population, addressing black maternal mortality and morbidity, health equity, and health access, as well as tackling black infant mortality and morbidity. Her future career goals involve advancing the health of women and children using policy and founding an MCH specialty hospital chain.



Technology Requirements

Required Hardware: Desktop Computer or Laptop (5 years old or newer, if possible); Webcam
Microphone & speakers; Cable/DSL or Wi-Fi connection.

Required Software: Windows 7 or Mac OSX 10.9+ or newer. Canvas as Learning Management System. Adobe Reader 9.0 or later. Web Browser updated to the latest version. Microsoft Office suite, including Microsoft Teams.

Didactic Learning - Module List

Module 1 – Introduction to Maternal and Child Health Research Translation

Module 2 – Integrity in MCH- Ethics and Policy Foundations

Module 3 – Quantitative and Qualitative Policy Research Methods

Module 4 – MCH Policy: From Theory to Practice

Module 5 – Navigating Policy: Health Communication Toolkit

Module 6 – Building Bridges: MCH Policy and Advocacy

Module 7 – Mind Mapping

Module 1 – Introduction to Maternal and Child Health Research Translation

Here, we will embark on a journey to explore the fascinating world of Translational Research and its applications in the field of Public Health. To kick-start our exploration, we have prepared a brief PowerPoint presentation for you to delve into. Simply click on the following link to access this week's PowerPoint and begin your learning experience. Let's dive in and discover the transformative potential of Translational Research in Public Health!

By the end of this week, scholars will be able to:

1. Define translational research and describe its key phases and significance in bridging the gap between scientific discoveries and public health practice
2. Identify the applications of translational research in addressing public health challenges and improving population health outcomes
3. Explore strategies for integrating translational research into public health initiatives and policies to reduce health disparities and promote health equity

PowerPoint Slides:

- [“What is Translational Research and Knowledge Translation”](#) (ppt)

Videos:

- Video Lecture: [“What is Translational Research?”](#)
 - This short video explains some basic principles and purposes of Translational Research
- Video Lecture: [“Knowledge Translation. What is it, why is it important and how do we achieve it?”](#)

- This video discusses the importance of knowledge translation and implementation science and how they can be used to significantly shorten the period between discovery and application of knowledge to narrow the know-do gap
- Video Lecture: [“Knowledge Translation: Translated”](#)
 - This is an introductory overview of Knowledge Translation (KT). The goal is to 'translate' the concept of KT itself for new students and general audiences.
- Video Lecture: [“Translating Public Health Research For Use in Policy and Practice”](#)
 - This tutorial addresses the importance of translating research for public health policy and practice, the factors that make this kind of communication difficult, and ways to do it more effectively

Additional Readings:

- Research Article: [“Use of infographics as a health-related knowledge translation tool”](#) (pdf)
- Research Article: [“Knowledge translation in health: how implementation science could contribute more”](#) (pdf)

Exercises:

- Exercise: [“Collaborative Storytelling”](#) (pdf)
- Exercise: [“Case Study: Implementing Paid Family Leave Policy to Support Maternal and Child Health”](#) (pdf)
- Exercise: [“KT Competencies Self-Assessment”](#)
- Exercise: [“MCH Navigator Self-Assessment”](#) (pdf)

Supplemental Material:

- PowerPoint Slides: [“Knowledge Translation”](#) (ppt)

Module 2 – Integrity in MCH- Ethics and Policy Foundations

Welcome to our journey into the depths of ethics in MCH policy! Ethics in MCH policy is not just a theoretical concept but a fundamental framework that guides data collection and reporting and decision-making processes that impact the lives of mothers, children, and communities worldwide.

This week, we will critically examine these ethical dimensions through various lenses, including cultural, legal, and philosophical perspectives. Through interactive discussion and reflective exercises, we will explore how ethical principles can inform and shape data-driven MCH policy initiatives aimed at advancing maternal and child health equity, dignity, and social justice

By the end of this week, scholars will be able to:

1. Identify ethical issues that arise in maternal and child health research translation
2. Discuss how to address ethical issues in maternal and child health research translation

3. Define cultural competence and its role in research translation

PowerPoint Slides:

- [“Ethics”](#) (ppt)

Videos:

- Video Lecture: [“Fiftieth Anniversary of Uncovering the Tuskegee Syphilis Study: The Story and Timeless Lessons”](#)
 - Summary: In any discussion of ethics in the U.S., the Tuskegee Syphilis Study stands out as a major ethical failure. This study, conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service, lacked scientific value, disregarded the autonomy of its participants, inflicted unnecessary harm, violated the principle of "do no harm," and subjected participants to unjust treatment. Please read the resources below for a deeper understanding.
 - Research Article: [“Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study”](#) (pdf)

Exercise:

[“Florida Perinatal Quality Collaborative: Obstetric Hemorrhage Initiative”](#) (pdf)

Additional Reading:

- Handbook: [Cultural Competence in Evaluation](#)

Supplemental Material:

- Video Lecture: [“Public Health Ethics. Thinking about bioethics, human rights, justice and moral responsibility”](#)
 - Summary: This video introduces a framework for understanding public health ethics, touching on topics like bioethics, human rights, justice, and moral responsibility. It highlights how ethics, as a guide for how we should live, applies to public and global health to ensure decisions are moral and fair.
- Video Lecture: [“Ethics in Public Health: A Closer Look at Current Issues”](#)
 - Summary: The CDC defines public health ethics as a structured approach to evaluating and guiding public health decisions by considering ethical principles, stakeholder values, and scientific evidence. This presentation will explore the concept of public health ethics, highlight how it differs from other ethical frameworks, and examine current ethical challenges in the field.
- Video Lecture: [“CADRE Webinar: Trust in Family-Professional Partnerships”](#)

- Summary: This webinar offers guidance on building, maintaining, and restoring trust between families of students with disabilities and the professionals who support them. It highlights research showing increasing conflict in these relationships and emphasizes that trust is a key barrier to effective partnerships. However, while trust is often recognized as essential, it is rarely clearly defined or addressed in ways that help prevent or resolve conflicts.

Module 3 – Quantitative and Qualitative Policy Research Methods

This week, students will begin to develop skills related to research and its application in policy! In this module, students will learn to

1. Define data-driven policies.
2. Identify different types of research data (quantitative and qualitative) generated in research studies as well as other sources of evidence that can speak to policymakers
3. Use data maps (evidence maps) to analyze a health problem
4. Identify policy options that address the risks and protective factors of the problem.
5. Discuss challenges that states may face when seeking to make better use of data to drive policy

PowerPoint Slides:

- [Translating Quantitative and Qualitative Research into Policy](#) (pdf)

Reading:

- Research Article: [“Integrated Knowledge Translation with Public Health Policy Makers- A Scoping Review”](#) (pdf)

Exercise:

- [“Exploring the Intersection of Policy and decision-makers: Engaging Knowledge Users in Research”](#) (docx)

Optional Supplemental Material:

- Video Lecture: [“Sources and Utilization of Secondary Data for MCH Research”](#)
 - Summary: This webinar provides background information on how maternal and child health professionals could engage in secondary data analysis.
- Slides [“Ten Commandments of Secondary Data Analysis”](#) (pdf)

Module 4 – MCH Policy: From Theory to Practice

This week, students will begin to use their translation skills and apply theory for real-world application. Using policy and communication insights, students will effectively take action. In this module, students will learn:

1. Utilize policy and communication strategies to address and influence current public health challenges
2. Apply theoretical frameworks to real-world scenarios, demonstrating the ability to translate academic knowledge into practical solutions

PowerPoint Slides:

- Supplemental PowerPoint Slides: [“Policy in MCH”](#) (pptx)

Reading:

- [“Brokering Power”](#) (docx)

Exercise: Developing an Issue Statement

- [“MCH Case Study Issue Statement”](#) (docx)
 - [“Brokering Power Worksheets”](#) (pdf)
 - [“Checklist for Power Broker Organizing Your Efforts”](#) (pdf)

Module 5 – Navigating Policy: Health Communication Toolkit

This week, we put the previous four modules to work and see what this looks like when applied in the real-life settings. In this module, students will:

1. Synthesize knowledge from the previous modules to address complex challenges in real-life public health settings
2. Demonstrate the practical application of learned concepts by analyzing and solving real-world scenarios

Readings:

- Research Article: [“What Do Dietary Supplements Have to Do With Eating Disorders Prevention”](#) (pdf)
- Webpage: [“STRIPED: Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders”](#)
- Webpage: [“Out of Kids’ Hands”](#)
- Webpage: [“Welcome to the STRIPED Advocacy Playbook!”](#)

Supplemental Resources:

- Research Article: [“Advocacy in Action: A Toolkit for Public Health Professionals”](#) (pdf) retrieved from Public Health Advocacy Institute Policy Resources

- Infographic: [“Components of Advocacy Framework PHAIWA”](#) (pdf) retrieved from Public Health Advocacy Institute Policy Resources
- Research Article: [“Messaging This Moment: A Handbook for Progressive Communicators”](#) (pdf)
- Research Article: [“Do No Harm Guide”](#) (pdf)

Additional Resources

- Research Article: [“Health literacy and public health”](#) (pdf)
- Video Lecture: [“Communicating Public Health”](#)
- Video Lecture: [“Strategies for Successful Public Health Messaging”](#)
- Infographic: [“Health Communication: A Policy Roadmap”](#) (pdf)

Module 6 – Building Bridges: MCH Policy and Advocacy

This week we will dive into MCH Advocacy. By the end of this week, scholars should be able to:

1. Define advocacy and its role in maternal and child health
2. Identify and discuss key policies and practices that impact maternal and child health

PowerPoint Slides:

- [Advocacy and MCH](#) (ppt)

Materials

- Handout: [“March of Dimes: 2023 Advocacy Accomplishments”](#) (pdf)
- Infographic: [“Public Health Advocacy: A Roadmap”](#) (pdf)

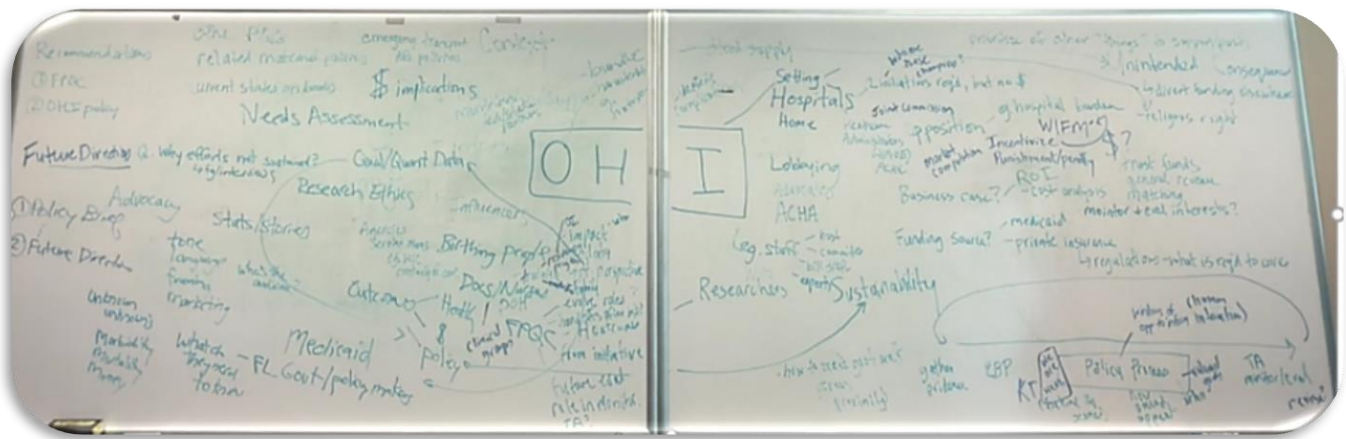
Exercise:

- [“Template for Presentation of Advocacy Issues”](#) (docx)
- [“Advocacy Reflection Questions”](#) (pdf)

Module 7 – Mind Mapping through Policy

This week focused on co-creating a visual map - via a mind mapping exercise - to (1) synthesize information, skills and experiences collected throughout the training program and (2) identify potential recommendations and next steps. Mind Mapping is a learning tool to brainstorm ideas and organize thoughts using a diagram. With the help of a facilitator (MCH faculty), students will be asked the who, what, where, and why questions surrounding a policy issue (i.e., hospital practices for preventing obstetric hemorrhage in Florida). Specifically, in this participatory lab

session, students will create a group mind map to connect the dots between content, skills and experiences gleaned throughout the training program, and to identify priority areas to continue to cultivate and translate MCH evidence into opportunities along the policy journey. By creating a mind map, students will be better able to remember what they learn in this course and identify gaps for what they would like to learn in the future (next policy steps or recommendations). Ultimately, the mind map (on a whiteboard) provided a visual guide for those who will continue working on strategies to tackle the policy issue. An example of a **draft mind map** is presented below for illustrative purposes. Please note that although the branches are not indicated in this example, the notes map out the various interrelated ideas from participants that emerged during the exercise.



Educational Assessment

Students completed the MCH Navigator Self-Assessment at the beginning and end of the training to measure their growth in MCH competencies that this course is designed to address. They also created dissemination products to present their work with their teams that outline how their knowledge and skill related to MCH competencies. Throughout the semester, students reflected on what was going well, what needed to be changed, and their next steps based on workplans that will be developed at the start of the training. Further evaluations were measured through pre-post KT Competencies self-assessments and a final course evaluation survey.