



CHLA UCEDD FALL NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026

A WELCOME MESSAGE FROM DR. LARRY YIN

Thank you to all our partners for all you do to support individuals with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities, their families, and one another. Your commitment and partnership are central to the work we do and to the strength of the community we continue to build together.

Through this newsletter, we're pleased to share updates on our programs, partnerships, resources, and activities, along with stories that reflect the work happening across our network.

At the CHLA UCEDD, we remain committed to advancing systemic change that fosters a more inclusive and accessible society for individuals with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities and their families. This work is strongest when grounded in partnership, shared learning, and mutual respect. Thank you for being part of it and for your continued dedication to improving the lives of children, families, and communities.



Larry Yin, MD, MSPH
Division Head, General Pediatrics
CHLA UCEDD Director

FY2026

By the Numbers



\$11.3M FUNDS
LEVERAGED



2,644 PROFESSIONAL
TRAINING



113 RESEARCH
ARTICLES/FINDINGS



475 COMMUNITY
ED & TA HOURS



7,289 PATIENTS
SERVED

Program Highlights

FY2026

The Parent Navigator Project

Runs parent-peer support to help families understand different services within Los Angeles County, for families who need special education, mental health, or developmental services through the Regional Center system.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

1,262

individuals served

9

Parent Navigators

90%

very satisfied

PROGRAM DETAILS

In FY2026, the project served 1,262 individuals

9 Parent Navigators, individuals with lived experience hired to assist other parents of children with developmental delay and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) provide services to 5 pediatric primary care clinics in Los Angeles

The parent navigators provided trainings to 121 individual parents, and 88 out of 97 who completed surveys (90%) indicated they were very satisfied with the trainings

In 2025 the Parent Navigator program expanded to the Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit (NICCU) at CHLA through the Stein Tikun Olam Early Connections Program to support families connecting with early intervention

TPEC

The Transforming Pediatrics in Early Childhood Program (TPEC) allows 5 Parent Navigators to provide services throughout all of Los Angeles County clinics, to improve developmental screening, connection to early intervention, and preventive parenting education and counseling

ENRICH

The Parent Partner project funded by the LA County Department of Public Health (the ENRICH project) served 796 individuals

Stein Tikun Olam Early Connections Program

Provides universal, hospital-wide infant-family mental health services to patients from birth to 3 years old. This early intervention aims to help children navigate the emotional challenges of their health conditions, prevent more significant mental health issues, and reduce the need for intensive services later.

FY2026 individuals served

Fetal Maternal Center:
122

Newborn Follow-up
Program: **262**

Newborn and Infant
Critical Care Unit
(NICCU): **146**

Cardiothoracic Intensive
Care Unit/Cardiovascular
Acute Care Unit
(CITCU/CV Acute): **284**

Inpatient universal
screening and brief
intervention: **715**

Outpatient specialty
medical clinic universal
screening and brief
intervention: **58**

Peer Navigator Employment Training Program (PNETP)

Provides Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities for transition-aged youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in positions that guide peers in the transition to adult healthcare and assist with service referrals to support community living. A two-year program funded by the Mitsubishi Electric America

Foundation that expanded the Innovative Peer Navigator Employment Pathway for Healthcare Services pilot program funded by the Department of Developmental Services.

Employment Outcomes

15 individuals completed the program and 6 did not complete the program (15/21 from previous cohorts = **71.4%** completed the program)

8/15 (53.3%) of participants who completed the program obtained employment

Participant Numbers

By the end of August 2026, **129** participants received navigation assistance from Peer Navigator interns to connect with adult healthcare providers, increase health management, and access Regional Center, Employment, Education, and Independent Living Services.

1,043 contacts made to participants by interns via phone, in person, Zoom, and email

364 referrals made total

121 healthcare referrals

31 employment referrals

90 education referrals

24 social recreation referrals

46 regional center referrals

35 independent living referrals

17 generic resource referrals

Innovators in Automation & Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship

This project developed a Robotics Programming curriculum tailored for individuals with IDD in the manufacturing sector. Individuals receive specialized training, certification, and job placement in advanced manufacturing.



California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS):

July 2026 - June 2028, COYA Pre-Apprenticeship Implementation Grant

Outcome: Pre-apprenticeship to launch at ACE Charter High School in September 2026 with 15 trainees (7-8 with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)); in September 2027 with 25 trainees: 15 at ACE Charter (7-8 with ASD) and 10 at College of the Canyons (5-6 with ASD)

California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) Program:

July 2026 - June 2028, Pre-Apprenticeship Implementation Grant

Outcome: Pre-apprenticeship to launch at ACE Charter High School in September 2026 with 15 trainees (7-8 with ASD); in 2027 with 25 trainees (12-14 with ASD): 15 at ACE Charter and 10 at College of the Canyons

Peer Navigation Transition Training Program

This program provides access to transition services and resources for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Los Angeles County.

24

FY2026 Total Trainings: 24

652

FY2026 Total Participants: 652

Participant breakdown

Self-Advocates: 76

Professionals: 235

Parents/Family: 341

Program Highlights

Peer Empowerment Network

A peer mentorship program, funded by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, where employed adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) provide mentorship to unemployed adults with IDD.

- Mentors and mentees from California, Tennessee, Colorado, and North Carolina have enrolled in the program
- From April 2025 to September 2026, seven cohorts of mentor-mentee pairs have participated
- Mentors and mentees meet over Zoom once a month for six months

14 of 28 job seekers (50%) who have completed the program are employed, with 7 participants in the final program cohort

Employment Mentorship Pathways

A combined peer and parent mentorship program, funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) at the Administration for Community Living (ACL), where employed adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their parents provide mentorship to unemployed adults with IDD and their parents.



New cohort starting Winter 2026-27. California adults and parents interested in participating can contact Dr. Ben Schwartzman at bschwartzman@chla.usc.edu.



Meet Some of Our Experts



Marian E. Williams, PhD

Clinical Psychologist and Director of the Stein Tikun Olam Early Connections Program. Dr. Williams explains that infant mental health is really about "early relational health," helping infants and caregivers build the kind of bond that lets a child feel safe enough to grow and thrive.

Read the full Q&A on early childhood mental health at chla.org



Cecily L. Betz, PhD, RN, FAAN

UCEDD's Nursing Director and Research Director, and a nationally recognized expert in health care transition planning for youth with special health care needs. Dr. Betz is the founder and editor-in-chief of Health Care Transitions, an open-access journal, and her research is featured throughout this issue's Publications Spotlight.



Research & Publications

Spotlight

Our team continues to contribute to the field through published research on developmental disabilities, family support, and pediatric care. Below are some of our recent publications.

1. Angell, A. M., Li, Y., Bian, J., Parchment, C., Yin, L., Chamala, S., Hakimjavadi, H., Thompson, L., & Guo, Y. (2025). Algorithmic Fairness in Machine Learning Prediction of Autism Using Electronic Health Records. *Studies in health technology and informatics*, 329, 1180-1184.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/SHTI251025>
2. Angell, A. M., Wee, C. P., Deavenport-Saman, A., Parchment, C., Bai, C., Solomon, O., & Yin, L. (2025). Sleep Disorders and Constipation in Autistic Children and Youth: Who Receives Standard of Care Drug Treatments? *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 55(12), 4365-4371.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-025-06762-7>
3. Barre, A., Zhang, D. A., Holm, V., Lew, D., Van Speybroeck, A., Iwinski, H., & Poon, S. C. (2025). Demographic and Clinical Predictors of Suicide Risk in Pediatric Surgical Clinics: A Retrospective Study of 79,000 Screenings. *Journal of developmental and behavioral pediatrics: JDBP*, 46(5), e433-e438.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0000000000001397>
4. Chamala, S., Keefer, M. S., McGuire, T., Diaz, L., Luberti, A. A., Lehmann, C. U., & Schmidt, R. J. (2025). Achieving ACGME Clinical Informatics Fellowship Accreditation: A Chronicle of Our Institution's Journey. *Applied clinical informatics*, 16(4), 1171-1183. <https://doi.org/10.1055/a-2680-5920>
5. Espinoza Salomon, J. C., Babaei, M., Deavenport-Saman, A., Solomon, O., Wee, C. P., Durazo-Arvizu, R., Sikder, A., Shah, P., Castillo, P., & Yin, L. (2025). Personal Activity Trackers and Family Engagement in a Pediatric Obesity Intervention: Randomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR formative research*, 9, e70341. <https://doi.org/10.2196/70341>
6. Gera, M. P., Garg, A., & Ragavan, M. I. (2026). Fortifying our commitment to pediatric academic medicine during turbulent times. *Pediatric research*, 99(1), 4-6. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-025-04621-w>



RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

7. Goldman VE, Antoun J, Rezvan PH, Fang K. School Absenteeism Screening in the Healthcare Setting: Linking Education and Medicine. J Sch Health. 2025 Oct;95(10):820-826. doi: [10.1111/josh.70052](https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.70052). PMID: 40760903

8. Hodara, E., Seegan, A., Ji, J., & Van Speybroeck, A. (2025). Treatment-refractory catatonia in an adolescent with a de novo SIK1 candidate variant: a case report of a multidisciplinary diagnostic odyssey. Frontiers in psychiatry, 16, 1657837.

9. Hong, S. J., Vu, M. H., Vanderbilt, D., Yin, L., Imagawa, K. K., & Deavenport-Saman, A. (2025). The Coexistence of Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences, and Parent-reported Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Severity: National Survey of Children's Health. Journal of developmental and behavioral pediatrics: JDBP, 46(5), e468-e474. <https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0000000000001395>

10. Kanak, M., Pierce, J., Rosario, A., Hall, J. E., Liberman, D. B., Rezvan, P. H., & Patel, M. (2025). Impact of a Novel Referral Program From a Children's Hospital Emergency Department to Primary Care: Does Referral Lead to Improved Care? Pediatric emergency care, 41(11), 859-863. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PEC.0000000000003449>

11. Lee, D., Del Cid-Linares, D., Van Speybroeck, A., Smith, K. A., Chmait, R. H., Keens, T. G., Ward, S. L. D., & Perez, I. A. (2026). Sleep-related breathing disorders beyond infancy following open spina bifida repair. European journal of pediatrics, 185(7), 476. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00431-026-07141-9>

12. Lee, H., Huang, S., Svetina Valdivia, D., & Schwartzman, B. (2025). On the Complex Sources of Differential Item Functioning: A Comparison of Three Methods. Educational and Psychological Measurement, OnlineFirst. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131644251379802>

13. Lee, J., Girdwood, T. C., & Betz, C. L. (2026). Novel Retrospective Perspectives of Healthcare Transitions From Emerging Adults With Chronic Conditions: A Quantitative Overview. Journal of pediatric health care, 40(3), e19-e30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2025.10.003>

14. Levy, T., Silver, H., Benrey, N., Siegel, A., Layton, C., Zemon, V., Gordon, J., Buxbaum, J. D., Kolevzon, A., & Siper, P. M. (2026). Transient visual evoked potential abnormalities in ADNP syndrome. Journal of neurodevelopmental disorders, 18(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s11689-026-09688-y>



RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

15. Makhinson, M., Pollack, L., Hallowell, R., Murray, C.H. ... Solomon, O., Ecological Medicine Working Group (2025). A Consensus Statement for Ecological Medicine: Moving Toward Connection-Based Medicine. EcoHealth.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10393-025-01757>

16. Mannino, J. E., Young, C. C., Ridosh, M. M., Cleverley, K., Li, L., Kysh, L., Harwood, C. A., Allemang, B., Tirabassi-Mathis, L., Hudson, S., Key, S. M., Schwartzman, B. C., Lee, J., Raam, M. S., & Betz, C. L. (2026). Self-management for youth and young adults with childhood-onset chronic conditions: A scoping review of health care transition planning literature. Health care transitions, 4, 100147.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hctj.2026.100147>

17. McClinchie, M. G., Umbaugh, H., Heike, C. L., Stock, N. M., Johns, A. L., Feragen, K. B., Drake, A. F., Aspinall, C., & Crerand, C. E. (2025). Understanding the Psychological Impact of Medical Care Experiences on Adults with Craniofacial Conditions: A Pilot Survey of Stress Symptoms and Resilience. The Journal of Craniofacial Surgery, 36(5), 1611-1618. <https://doi.org/10.1097/SCS.00000000000011299>

18. Mirzaian, C. B., Deavenport-Saman, A., Hudson, S., & Betz, C. L. (2025). IDD Health Care Transition: Stakeholder Perspectives. IDD, 63(4), 299-314.
<https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-63.4.299>

19. Mirzaian, C. B., Matic, T., Wilson, M. L., Franklin, I., Castro, V., Gonzalez, S., Byun, S. A., Deavenport-Saman, A., Solomon, O., Quebles, I., Poulsen, M. K., Bughi-Capecci, S. A., & Yin, L. (2026). The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on School Readiness and Behavioral Health Concerns: A Prospective Cohort Pilot Study. Children (Basel), 13(6), Article 835. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children13060835>

20. Mirzaian, C. B., Smith, R., & Betz, C. L. (2025). An Examination of Health Care Transition Experiences Through Parents' Reflections About Their Sons or Daughters Who Have IDD. Children (Basel, Switzerland), 12(7), 886.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/children12070886>

21. Nghiem, N., Martes Gomez, M., Vu, M. H., Deavenport-Saman, A., Vanderbilt, D., Lakshmanan, A., Wang, S., Boodaghian, A., & Mirzaian, C. B. (2025). Association of maternal primary language with neurodevelopmental outcomes in high-risk infants. Journal of perinatology, 45(12), 1722-1728. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41372-025-02438-3>

22. Park, S., Deavenport-Saman, A., Vu, M., Durazo-Arvizu, R., Park, H., Delgado, J., Mirzaian, C., Sayegh, C., Mendoza, N., Osumo, J., Enciso, M., Torres, A., & Yin, L. (2026). Smart Inhaler RCT for Improving Inhaler Technique in Adolescents with IDD and Asthma. Academic pediatrics, 103387. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2026.103387>



RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

23. Roberts, A., Ospelt, E., Thapa, S., McDonough, R., Aleppo, G., Basina, M., Scott, M. L., Jones, K. E., Cossen, K., Majidi, S., Weissberg-Benchell, J., Munoz, C., & Ebekozen, O. (2025). Anxiety in Youth and Adults With Type 1 Diabetes and Associations With Clinical Outcomes: Data From the T1D Exchange Quality Improvement Collaborative. *Diabetes spectrum*, 38(5), 649-654. <https://doi.org/10.2337/ds25-0021>

24. Schutz, M. A., Awsumb, J. M., Carter, E. W., Burgess, L., & Schwartzman, B. (2025). Connecting Youth With Significant IDD to Paid Work: An Innovative School-Based Intervention. *IDD*, 63(4), 329-343. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-63.4.329>

25. Scott, S. E., Gera, M. P., Ragavan, M. I., & Pediatric Policy Council (2025). Policy-level solutions to support families experiencing adverse childhood experiences. *Pediatric research*, 98(2), 351-353. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-025-04284-7>

26. Sieving, R. E., Ford, C. A., English, A., Bretl, L. M., Brown, J., Castillo, J. M., Cowal, E., Coyne-Beasley, T., Davies, S., Hensel, D. J., Irwin, C. E., Jr, Knopf, A., Koyama, A., Mihaly, L., Pitts, S. A. B., Ricondo, S., Schneir, A., Sherer, S., & Traylor, A. C. (2025). Education as a Way to Improve Adolescent and Young Adult Health. *The Journal of adolescent health*, 77(1), 7-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2025.02.017>

27. Stock NM, Costa B, Parnell J, Johns AL, Crerand C, Billaud Feragen K, Stueckle L, Mills A, Magee L, Hotton M, & Heike C. A conceptual thematic framework of psychological adjustment in caregivers of children with craniofacial microsomia. *Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Journal*. 2025;62(7):1228-1240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10556656241245284>

28. Surfas I. Q. (2025). Feedback: Cultivating resilience and growth. *Journal of education and health promotion*, 14, 263. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1898_24

29. Tafolla, M., Benrey, N., Rosen, N., Lerner, J., & Lord, C. (2025). Autism Assessment with English-Spanish Bilingual Individuals in the United States. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-025-06965-y>

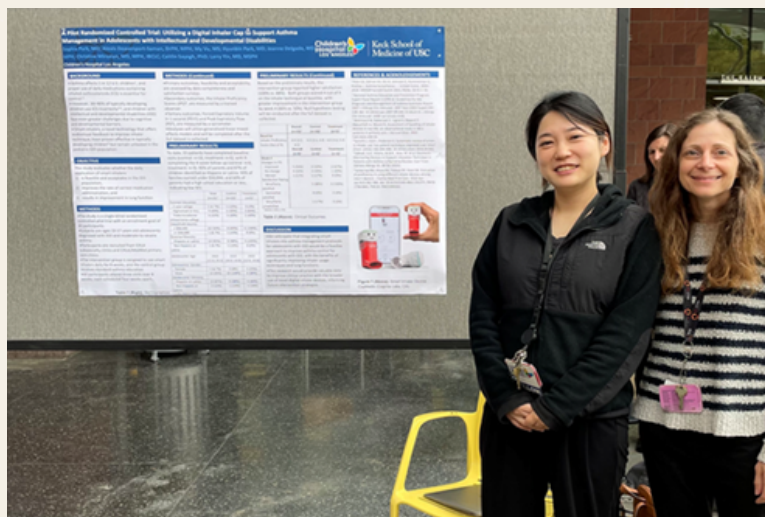
30. Vidmar, A. P., Martin, M. J., Abel, S., Kim, A. G., Munoz, C. E., Weitzner, M., Derrington, S. F., & Samakar, K. (2025). Bariatric surgery and semaglutide in a youth with juvenile Huntington disease and severe obesity: a case report. *Journal of medical case reports*, 19(1), 523. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13256-025-05615-2>



RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

31. Vidmar, A. P., Martin, M. J., Kim, A. G., Weitzner, M., Munoz, C. E., Abel, S. A., Wong, H. J., & Samakar, K. (2026). Beyond surgery: a multimodal framework for a pediatric metabolic and bariatric surgery program in a safety-net children's hospital. *Surgery for obesity and related diseases*, 22(3), 336-343.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soard.2025.11.011>
32. Yoshizawa M, Rafeedie J, Tang J, Lei B, Durazo-Arvizu R, Azucar D, Hudson S, Rao S, Imagawa KK, Deavenport-Saman, A. Screen Time and Child Depression and Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*, In Press. <https://doi.org/10.2196/83228>

Project Highlight



Asthma Care

A pilot clinical trial testing "smart inhaler" technology to help prevent asthma-related Emergency Department visits. The device teaches proper at-home symptom monitoring and medication use for children, with funding covering inhalers and signup fees for six months.

In a pilot trial of 28 adolescents with IDD and asthma, the intervention group showed significantly greater improvement in inhaler technique by week 8 compared to the control group ($p=0.02$), including similar gains among adolescents with autism. Additional funding is needed to support a larger efficacy trial.

Presented by Alexis Deavenport-Saman, DrPH, MPH, and Sophia Park, MD, at the 9th Annual Robert Adler Education Day, May 2, 2025.



CA-Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (CA-LEND) Training Program

Trains leaders who are competent in neurodevelopmental disabilities, ethical and professional conduct, interdisciplinary collaboration, health systems and community problem-solving, policy work, research, leadership, family-centered care, and discipline-specific skills.

Impact at a glance:



86

total pre-service
trainees



31

long-term
(300+ hours)



42

intermediate-term
(40-299 hours)



13

short-term
(under 40 hours)

Trainees represented 15 disciplines: Audiology, Dentistry, Family Support, Education/Special Education, Health Administration, Individual with a Disability, Medicine (Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics and Pediatrics), Nursing, Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Psychology, Public Health, Social Work, and Speech-Language Pathology.



UCEDD Training

USC UCEDD provided training across multiple disciplines and settings in FY2026:

	Academic General Pediatrics Fellows	1
	AltaMed & USC Family Practice Residents	20
	CA-LEND Training Program	99
	CHLA Pediatric Residency Program	111
	Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) Fellows in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)	5
	Kaiser School of Medicine Students	60
	Primary Care Training and Enhancement – Residency Training in Behavioral Health	114
	Substance use Treatment Didactic and Skills Sessions	114
	USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Students	60



Congratulations!



We're proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our UCEDD team members this quarter.

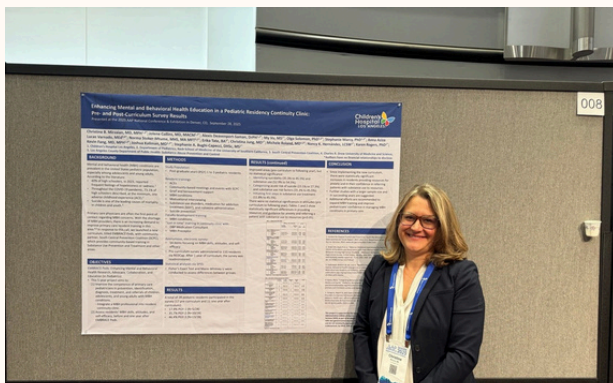


The CHLA UCEDD worked on a curriculum to better support children and adults with disabilities in emergency situations.

Left to right: Larry Yin, MD, MSPH, Imani Franklin, MPH, Olga Solomon, PhD, Alexis Deavenport-Saman, DrPH, MPH, Crystal Ashe, MPH, and Susan Gantan, MPH

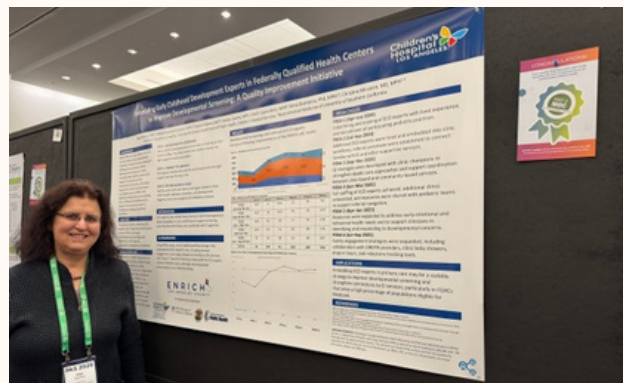


Dr. Marian Williams (right) presenting at the European Paediatric Psychology Conference in Málaga, Spain, alongside Melissa Carson, PsyD, Clinical Psychologist, October 2025



Enhancing Mental and Behavioral Health Education in a Pediatric Residency Continuity Clinic: Pre and Post Curriculum Survey Results, Council on Adolescents and Young Adults Poster Session

Presented by Christine Mirzaian, MD, MPH, IBCLC at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference in Denver, Colorado



Embedding Early Childhood Development Experts in Federally Qualified Health Centers to improve Developmental Screening: A Quality Improvement Initiative

Presented by Olga Solomon, PhD, at the Academic Pediatric Association's 15th Annual Quality Improvement Research Conference in Boston, Massachusetts



Remembering Dr. Wheeler



It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Barbara Yoshioka Wheeler, Ph.D., R.N., on November 23, 2025, in Minneapolis, MN. Dr. Wheeler was surrounded by her family in her final moments. She devoted more than 30 years to the CHLA UCEDD as Associate Director, where she played an instrumental role in advancing access to care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Throughout her career, she touched countless lives through her advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families, working tirelessly to ensure that their voices were heard and their needs addressed. Her work focused on addressing access to care across multiple service systems, beginning with infant mortality research at Charles Drew Post-Graduate Medical School and later evaluating Infant Health Programs for the State of California. She built capacity within community-based organizations to fill gaps in services for various groups and helped organize educational networks.

Dr. Wheeler was appointed to the President's Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities during the Clinton administration, serving for five years. She also led National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded research that addressed access to information for parents of children with autism who faced low literacy by developing accessible formats that distilled complex biomedical research. In addition, she contributed significantly to workforce development initiatives and served as lead faculty for the LA Site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program under the Kennedy Krieger Institute. As PI for one of two Disability Partnership grants funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) with California State University, Los Angeles, she helped establish the Minor in Developmental Disabilities at Cal State LA, which continues to this day.

Dr. Barbara Yoshioka Wheeler mentored many individuals from different disciplines and leaves behind a rich legacy rooted in compassion and unwavering dedication. Her legacy will continue to shape the field and the lives of countless families for generations to come.