MCH RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP
2025-2026 PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Engaging Women of Color in Pregnancy and Fertility Research

Professor: Jasmine Abrams, PhD
Department: Social and Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health
Email: jasmine.abrams@yale.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

This project investigates strategies to meaningfully engage women of color in pregnancy and fertility research, addressing historic underrepresentation and inequities in reproductive health studies. The project aims to inform more inclusive research practices and interventions. Data collection has been completed; the current focus is on preparing publications, disseminating findings to academic and community audiences, and pursuing future funding opportunities.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

- Contribute to writing manuscripts, including drafting background/discussion sections and conducting literature reviews.
- Assist in translating findings into community and clinical dissemination materials (policy briefs, presentations, infographics, social media posts).
- Conduct data synthesis and prepare figures/tables for publications.
- Provide support for new grant proposals by compiling background literature, drafting text, and proofreading.
- Attend and contribute to regular project team meetings focused on implementation and dissemination strategies.

Mother's Heart: Postpartum Remote Blood Pressure Monitoring Study

Professor: Jasmine Abrams, PhD
Department: Social and Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health
Email: jasmine.abrams@yale.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

The Mother's Heart project evaluates a remote blood pressure monitoring intervention designed to prevent severe maternal morbidity among postpartum people, with particular attention to women of color disproportionately impacted by hypertension-related complications. With data collection complete, the current focus is on manuscript preparation, dissemination to health system stakeholders, and securing funding to expand implementation.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

- Contribute to writing manuscripts, including drafting background/discussion sections and conducting literature reviews.
- Assist in translating findings into community and clinical dissemination materials (policy briefs, presentations, infographics, social media posts).
- Conduct data synthesis and prepare figures/tables for publications.
- Provide support for new grant proposals by compiling background literature, drafting text, and proofreading.
- Attend and contribute to regular project team meetings focused on implementation and dissemination strategies.

Back to the top

Analysis and Translation of Maternal Mortality and Birth Data for Practice and Policy, including the website Birth by the Numbers

Professor: Eugene Declercq
Email: declercq@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1-2
Timeframe: November 2025 - December 2026

Background

The goal of Birth by the Numbers is to present accurate, up-to-date information on childbirth practices and outcomes in the United States and internationally. We strive to make timely data accessible and understandable to key audiences including prospective parents, clinicians, childbirth educators, college faculty and students, policymakers and the media.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

The project needs a student with some data skills and a great deal of enthusiasm about working with birth data to work on three different projects, specifically:

(1) The *analysis of U.S. national birth certificate data* or data from Listening to Mothers related to multiple questions concerning current birth practices. The project will be developed by the student into an abstract for a presentation at the 2025 APHA meeting which the student is expected to present with Dr. Declercq's support. Additionally, preliminary findings will be shared in meetings with MCH academic and public health practitioners who are internal and external to BU.

(2) The second part of the fellowship will involve *working with the team of students who develop materials for and oversee and help with the design of the website "Birth by the Numbers."* (www.birthbythenumbers.org). The fellow will work on website development and support, with a particular emphasis on developing up-to-date resources and presentations, including mapping, on childbirth data that can be downloaded for use in college classrooms and made available to students, faculty and the press.

(3) *Exploring data on maternal mortality in the U.S.* Fellow will work with Dr. Declercq on the examination of reports from state maternal mortality review committees and publicly available data to examine patterns and trends in maternal mortality.

Back to the top

Social Media Influences on Substance Use and Disordered Eating Behaviors among Transgender and Gender Diverse Young Adults: The IMAGES Project

Preceptor: Professor Allegra Gordon, ScD, MPH
Department: Community Health Sciences
Email: allegrag@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

The Interactive Media and Gender-Related Stressors & Strengths (IMAGES) Study is a mixed-methods research project motivated by mounting epidemiologic evidence that transgender and gender diverse young people are at elevated risk for substance use and eating disorders relative to cisgender peers. This project aims to improve our understanding of the influence of online social environments on young adult stress and coping behaviors. In Phase 1 of the study we conducted a "daily diary" study (small surveys every day over 10 days) with 152 transgender and gender diverse young adults (ages 18-25) and follow-up interviews with a subsample of 30 participants.

We are now in Phase 2, in which we are focused on (a) analyzing data from Phase 1, (b) writing up and disseminating results, and (3) working with a Young Adult Advisory Board to build on these results and co-design a digital media literacy intervention ("digital toolkit") tailored to the needs transgender young adults.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

We are seeking a student with strong writing and communication skills and an interest in intersectional LGBTQ health equity research to join our team for the year. The Fellow will work directly with Dr. Gordon on data analysis, interpretation, and dissemination. Depending on the project timeline, the Fellow may also work on conducting usability testing of the co-designed digital toolkit, and a 3-month follow-up study to assess feasibility and acceptability of the toolkit.

The fellow's key activities may include: (a) being trained in qualitative coding and data analysis; (b) designing dissemination materials (e.g., infographic); (c) community engagement via participant recruitment, screening, and interviewing for usability testing; (d) helping with feasibility study (online survey); (e) attendance at regular Harvard SOGIE Health Equity Collaborative meetings and work with collaborators outside of BU, including potential for co-authorship. The project can be developed by the Fellow into an abstract for presentation at the 2026 American Public Health Association annual meeting or another conference relevant to the Fellow's career goals. For interested students with quantitative data analysis expertise, there is an additional opportunity to conduct analysis and/or co-author a manuscript for publication.

Back to the top

Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) within Families Impacted by the Opioid Epidemic

Professor: Jacey A. Greece, DSc, MPH
Department: Community Health Sciences
Email: jabloom@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 2
Timeframe: November 2025 - December 2026

Position Overview
The Maternal Child Health (MCH) Fellow will support a community-based initiative focused on understanding and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) related to exposure to substance use and family instability stemming from the opioid epidemic. This fellowship combines applied research, program development, and community engagement to strengthen protective factors, reduce harms, and improve child and family well-being.

Key Responsibilities
Research & Assessment
- Collect and analyze data on the intergenerational impacts of opioid use disorder (OUD) and ACEs.
- Conduct literature reviews and support evaluation of program outcomes.

Family & Community Engagement
- Collaborate with families, caregivers, and community partners to elevate lived experience.
- Facilitate listening sessions, focus groups, and community-informed program design.

Program Design & Evaluation
- Assist in developing trauma-informed prevention and intervention strategies.
- Support monitoring and evaluation to track progress toward health and equity outcomes through mixed methods approaches.

Equity & Cultural Responsiveness
- Apply a health equity lens to ensure interventions are inclusive and culturally responsive.
- Promote access for disproportionately impacted populations.

Knowledge Translation
- Prepare policy briefs, community education materials, and research summaries.
- Share findings to inform sustainable practice and policy change.

Anticipated Outcomes
- Improved participant mental health and resilience.
- Strengthened family and community support systems.
- Reduced incidence of opioid use and overdose in targeted communities.
- Increased participant knowledge of harm reduction and recovery strategies.
- Enhanced cross-sector collaboration and culturally competent care delivery.

Qualifications
- Graduate-level training in public health, maternal and child health, social work, psychology, or a related discipline.
- Strong understanding of trauma-informed approaches and social determinants of health.
- Experience in qualitative and/or quantitative research methods.
- Excellent communication skills, with the ability to engage diverse stakeholders.
- Commitment to advancing health equity and community-based practice.

Fellowship Opportunity

This fellowship provides a unique opportunity to integrate maternal and child health practice with substance use prevention, family resilience, and trauma-informed care. The MCH Fellow will contribute to building sustainable systems of support that mitigate the harms of opioid use within families while promoting safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children.

Primary Community-Based Partner

Winthrop Department of Public Health & Clinical Services

Back to the top

Designing a Regional Home Visiting Model for New Parents and Babies

Professor: Jacey A. Greece, DSc, MPH
Department: Community Health Sciences
Email: jabloom@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: November 2025 - December 2026

Position Overview
The Maternal Child Health (MCH) Home Visiting Program is focused on designing an evidence-based, regionally tailored model to support new parents and infants. This project will conduct a comprehensive scan of current home visiting approaches, identify service gaps, and develop a framework for implementing a sustainable, culturally responsive program. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all families—particularly those disproportionately impacted by health and social inequities—have access to high-quality maternal and child health supports during the critical perinatal and early childhood period.

Key Components of the Project

Research & Environmental Scan
- Conduct a review of established MCH home visiting models (e.g., Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers).
- Assess current services in the region to identify overlaps, barriers, and unmet needs.

Gap Analysis & Needs Assessment
- Collect stakeholder and family input on barriers to access and gaps in services.
- Examine equity-related issues such as cultural competence, language access, and support for families affected by substance use, housing instability, or economic hardship.

Design of Training & Protocols
- Develop training standards for home visitors with emphasis on trauma-informed care, maternal mental health, early childhood development, and harm reduction.
- Propose supervision, professional development, and workforce sustainability strategies.

Framework Development
- Outline referral pathways, intake processes, and cross-sector collaboration mechanisms.
- Recommend funding models and program evaluation metrics to ensure long-term sustainability and accountability.

Anticipated Outcomes
- A comprehensive report mapping current home visiting models and their applicability to regional needs.
- Identification of service gaps and opportunities for innovation in maternal and child health delivery.
- A draft training protocol for home visitors emphasizing cultural competence and trauma-informed practice.
- A framework for implementation that includes referral systems, evaluation strategies, and sustainability options.
- Strengthened cross-sector alignment among healthcare providers, public health agencies, and community-based organizations.

Program Opportunity
This project offers an opportunity to co-create a regional MCH Home Visiting Program that reflects the realities and strengths of the community it serves. By grounding the model in research, local data, and lived experience, the initiative will lay the foundation for a program that promotes safe, nurturing environments for parents and babies while advancing equity and resilience across the region.

Primary Community-Based Partner
Winthrop Department of Public Health & Clinical Services

Back to the top

The CHANCE Study: Considering the Health of Adolescents Navigating Community Violence Exposure

Supervisor & Mentor: Patrece Joseph, PhD
Email: pjoseph@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 2
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

The purpose of this project is to better understand the mental health needs of youth impacted by violence and identify opportunities for community-level interventions to better support youth and youth providers. To do so, we conducted interviews with youth providers in Massachusetts.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

Fellows will support:
  (1) Literature reviews
  (2) Qualitative data analyses
  (3) Dissemination of interview findings via manuscripts, brief reports and community presentations to Boston's Office of Youth Engagement and Activities (OYEA)
  (4) Development of a formal report for OYEA and infographics that will be shared with community organizations
  (5) Design interactive presentations to share findings with young people and gather their feedback to inform future project directions.

Fellows will also conduct feedback sessions of interview findings with youth.

[Back to the top](#)

Fertility Trends in the US, by Sociodemographic Groups

Professor: Collette Ncube, PhD
Department: Global Health
Email: ncube@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 2
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

The Ncube Lab is looking for a research fellow with interests in perinatal epidemiology. Dr. Ncube's research examines the social and structural drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in maternal and infant health. She has active research projects examining preterm birth and severe maternal morbidity, to which she applies diverse quantitative and participatory methodologies.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

This position would afford a research fellow(s) the opportunity to develop or hone skills in applied epidemiology – work with large datasets, perform descriptive analyses, and create high quality tables and figures for publication in a scientific journal. Specifically, the fellow(s) will be responsible for conducting descriptive epidemiologic analyses of fertility rates in the US, within and across sociodemographic subgroups. The fellow(s) will have the opportunity to contribute manuscript writing, if interested, and enjoy a collaborative and supportive research team environment. Additionally, the fellow(s) will participate in periodic meetings that include the non-BU collaborator for the presentation and discussion of preliminary results.

Back to the top

Evaluating Interventions to Improve Treatment Outcomes among Women and other Vulnerable Individuals Living with HIV in South Africa

Professor: Lora Sabin, PhD
Department: Global Health
Email: lsabin@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

This project will equip a student with the skills and expertise relating to implementation of a randomized clinical trial in Cape Town, South Africa, and to analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (including cost data). Dr. Sabin is the co-PI (with Dr. Orrell, an infectious diseases expert and physician based in Cape Town) on this study that is assessing outcomes and implementation of multiple interventions to improve adherence to and retention in HIV treatment for individuals on treatment in community clinics in Cape Town. Participants include pregnant women and adolescents. The fellow would help with numerous activities we will undertake in the final year of the study: analyzing qualitative and quantitative data (as interests and skills allow), drafting abstracts, and developing presentations and manuscripts to disseminate our findings.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

The fellow will work closely with Lora and potentially other BUSPH team members on these activities, depending on what emerges as most urgent and timely, and engage in:
- Qualitative data analysis
- Quantitative data analysis
- Interpreting data
- Drafting abstracts
- Drafting presentations (posters and PPT)
- Drafting a manuscript

PrEPwise Project: Black Women's Sexual Health

Professor: Sylvia Shangani, PhD
Department: Community Health Sciences
Email: sylvia65@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

Dr Shangani is seeking a research fellow with interests in Black women's sexual health and HIV prevention research. Dr. Shangani's research examines behavioral, social and structural drivers of HIV disparities among Black women, with active NIH K01-funded research developing community-based PrEP intervention delivered by community health workers in Eastern Virginia. The project applies diverse participatory and mixed-methods approaches to address HIV prevention barriers in Black women.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

This position would provide the fellow the opportunity to develop skills in implementation science research, sexual health research, community-based participatory research methods, and HIV prevention intervention development, while simultaneously immersing themselves in research addressing Black women's sexual health disparities. The fellow will work closely with Dr. Shangani to support the design and adaptation of the PrEP decision aid intervention for Black women seeking HIV testing services, while contributing to the research portfolio on Black women's sexual health research. **Specific Deliverables and Responsibilities:**

1. **Research Support**
   - Conduct literature reviews on PrEP interventions for Black women
   - Develop qualitative interview guides for community health workers and Black women participants
   - Assist with IRB documentation and regulatory submissions
   - Support recruitment material development and community partnership coordination
2. **Project Management**
   - Learn and set up REDCap database for future data collection
   - Coordinate meetings with community partners and advisory board members
   - Track project milestones and maintain study documentation
   - Assist with budget planning and expense tracking
3. **Manuscript Development**
   - Co-author papers/manuscripts from the project with authors internal and external to BU
   - Prepare background research summaries for community partner organization
   - Support grant writing activities for future R01 application planning
4. **Learning Opportunities**
   - Implementation science and community-based participatory research methods
   - HIV prevention research with priority populations
   - Survey design and implementation
   - Qualitative research design and interview guide development
   - Clinical trial preparation and regulatory processes

Qualitative research experience is preferred but not required. This hybrid role requires a commitment of 8–10 hours per week and offers co-authorship opportunities on publications.

Menstrual Cycle Length as a Predictor of Future Health

Professor: Amelia Wesselink
Department: Epidemiology
Email: awkw23@bu.edu
Number of Fellows: 1
Timeframe: December 2025 – December 2026

Background

The MCH fellow will work closely with Dr. Wesselink to conduct an epidemiologic data analysis of the association between menstrual cycle length and premature mortality using data from the Black Women's Health Study.

Fellow Role/Specific Activities

The fellow will participate in the development of a data analysis plan, analysis of data, and the drafting of a manuscript with authorship. In addition, the fellow will take part in periodic meetings with BU and non-BU collaborators to present and discuss preliminary results. This project has the potential to take part in the writing of a future grant proposal as well. This fellowship is ideal for a student in the Epi/Bio functional certificate and/or some level, even if not extensive, of experience with data analyses.

Back to the top