

National Center for Disability and Pregnancy Research: Overview

August 2025

Introduction

The National Center for Disability and Pregnancy Research (NCDPR), housed within the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at Brandeis University, examines pertinent knowledge gaps about the perinatal health of women with disabilities, from preconception to postpartum. Funded by the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), the Center is co-lead by Dr. Monika Mitra, Director of the Lurie Institute, and Dr. Willi Horner-Johnson, from Oregon Health & Science University. NCDPR is a collaborative effort, comprising partners from several research institutions, including Oregon Health & Science University, the University of Michigan, the University of Toronto, and the Magee-Womens Hospital Research Institute & Foundation. Collectively, we conduct cross-disability, multidisciplinary research and share our findings with a wide audience. The NCDPR Community Advisory Board provides guidance on the Center's research priorities, knowledge translation activities, and overall direction.

The National Center for Disability and Pregnancy Research has five discrete research and policy projects that contribute to our understanding of disabled women's perinatal needs, experiences, risks, and outcomes.

Research Projects



Expanding the Evidence Base on Perinatal Health and Outcomes in Diverse Disability Populations

Leads: Willi Horner-Johnson, Monika Mitra, and Anne Valentine

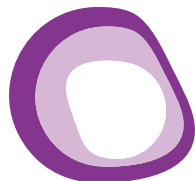
We use state and national data to investigate how preconception risks, birth experiences, and healthcare costs differ by disability status, disability type, and sociodemographic factors.



Precon4All Trial: Efficacy Evaluation and Scale-Up Dissemination of a Preconception Education Intervention for People with Mobility Disability

Leads: John Harris

The project tests the effectiveness of the Precon4All intervention for women with mobility disabilities. Precon4All aims to reduce pregnancy-related risks and enhance participants' understanding compared to a standard preconception education, with the goal of enhancing pregnancy and postpartum health.



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ACCEPTED (American Sign Language Prenatal Clinical Course as a Pregnancy Tool to Empower the Deaf)

Leads: Michael McKee and Angela Earhart

This intervention study will develop and test online birth classes, delivered in American Sign Language, to address gaps in perinatal care access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) pregnant women. We will assess the efficacy of online pregnancy courses for DHH women who participate in the ACCEPTED prenatal course.



Medicaid Doula Coverage and Disability Access

Leads: Robyn Powell

This project examines how state-based policies related to Medicaid doula benefits impact women with disabilities and healthcare costs. Through a qualitative analysis, we will interview disabled women, doulas, and clinicians about their experiences with disability-inclusive doula services.



Quality Indicators for Perinatal Mental Health for People with Disabilities

Leads: Hilary Brown and Majorie Aunos

This study will develop and identify quality indicators for perinatal mental health care for women with diverse disabilities. We will also develop and test an e-learning module for mental healthcare providers to improve their knowledge and delivery of perinatal mental health care to women with disabilities.

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